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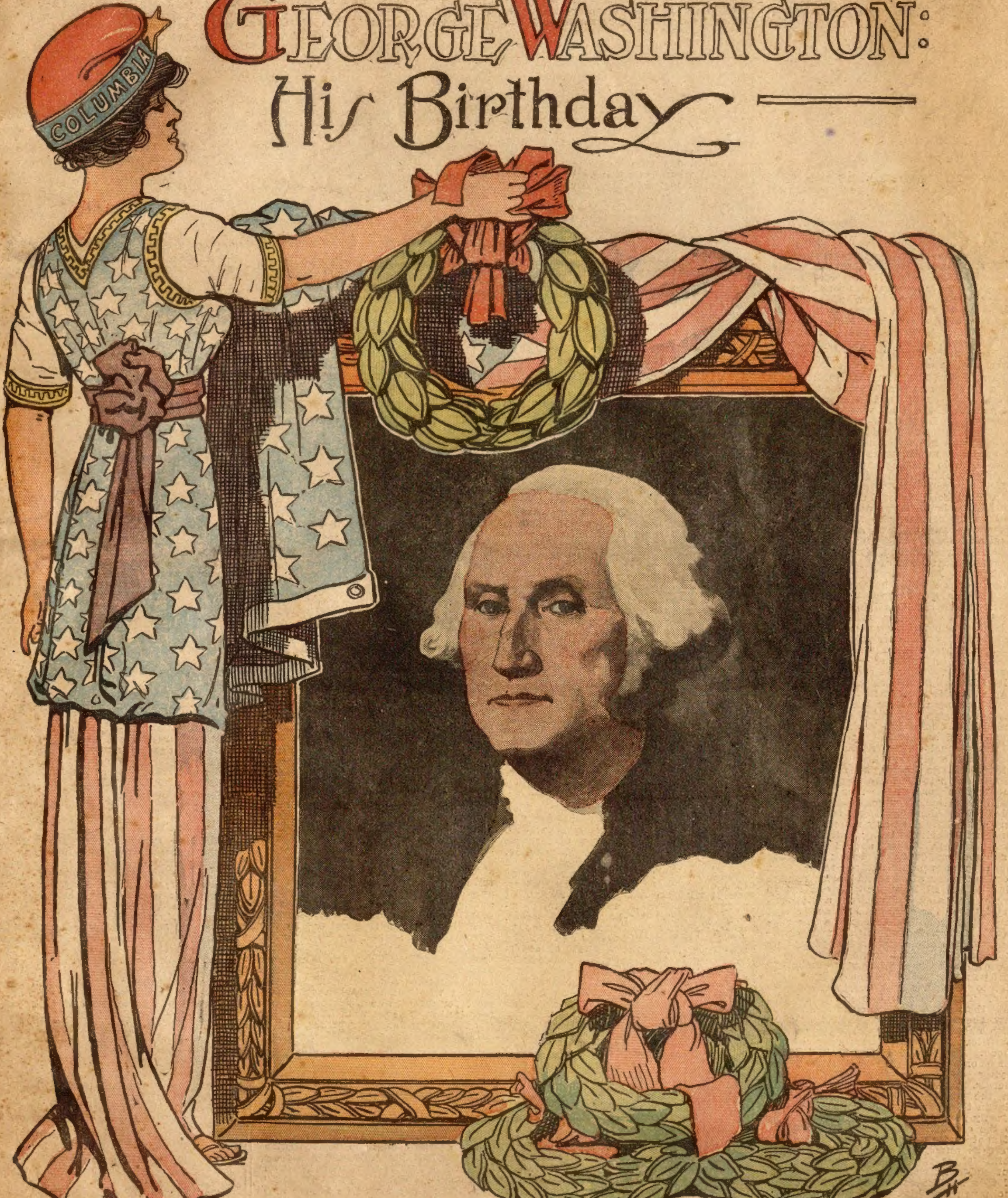
GEORGE WASHINGTON:
His Birthday



THEY TOOK JUAREZ

By AUGUSTIN W. BREEDEN

"He put off his bomb."

CIUDAD JUAREZ is a little city built of sun-baked mud cakes, and is nearly one story high. It stands on the bank of a river that has never had any water in it since the passing of the ice age, and is the first glimpse of revolutionary Mexico that the tourist gets. Incidentally it smells rather bad. The inhabitants pronounce it See-you-dah Who-are-ye's; and the grand high military potentates of the ancient empire of old King Porfirio play hide-and-seek in and out of this little burg, and when they tag a man, he is no more, for they tag him with a Krag Jorgenson.

Now, Jones, the man that took Juarez on a certain sunshiny day, was a little quiet, weak-eyed, mild-mannered bookkeeper from the piny woods of central Mississippi. He was red-headed, freckled, and had a slight stoppage in his speech; but he was a dog at figures, and was so mild and unobtrusive that he was no more trouble to his employer than his adding machine, and not half so noisy when in operation. Jones had started as a plain bookkeeper, but by successive promotions had finally worked up to where he was the secretary to the president of a big company in New Orleans. In this position he was obliged to learn a great deal of gumbo French, and to acquire at least a smattering of Spanish as it is spoken in America. So, being a linguist, Jones decided he would spend his vacation in a foreign city; and Juarez being the nearest of all foreign cities by land, Jones chose Juarez.

Now, dear bloodthirsty reader, please do not throw down this story in disgust. We are now approaching a very bloody scene. Jones was an amateur photographer in a small way, and so he carried his kodak with him on his visit to this strange foreign city. He arrived in El Paso, which is just across the river bed from Juarez, and having slept well, bathed, and shaved, he doffed his bookkeeper's togs and donned an outfit that looked quite military, consisting of a khaki suit; leggings, and a military hat. Then, armed with his little kodak, he strolled cautiously down toward the river and gazed dubiously across at the frontier of that warlike nation, Mexico. He had heard tales of sudden fighting breaking out across the border at any moment, and of innocent Americans being killed by long-range bullets. What should he do if war were suddenly to break out? He picked a convenient shelter to run for. Perhaps, after all, he had better confine his visit to El Paso, and be content to say he had seen Juarez from a distance. But later in the day, when he saw street cars forging boldly across the International Bridge, loaded with Americans—men, women and children—he picked up courage and decided to go over.

He got off the car in front of the big bull pen where the troops of temporary dictator Cominas y Toros, were quartered. There he saw two machine guns, and they gave him a shock. Also he saw there about two hundred soldiers with about two hundred rounds of ammunition each, and they gave him a shock. He concealed his kodak, for fear some one would think he was a spy trying to secure important military secrets. A soldier fairly ran over him on the walk, and Jones apologized to him in the best Spanish he could muster. Finally poor Jones made bold to walk up to the cathedral, and there the evidence of shot and shell in the day of Madero were so numerous that he fairly had a chill. What if hostilities should break out suddenly, and he right in the midst of this warlike city? The thought was too much for him. He boarded a car, and was soon back in the United States without having secured a single photograph.

But a day or two later he became very bold. He followed a group of little giggling schoolgirls and an old maid chaperon about one whole afternoon, going into the very haunts of the Mexicans and "bearding the lion in his den," as it were. And on this trip he made several pictures. There was one place that was of special interest to him, that was the market. It reminded him very much of the French market in New Orleans, only it was more picturesque, filthier, noisier, and more smelly. It was the desire of his heart to get a photo of this ancient place. He sidled round, glanced sheepishly at sellers of tortillas, caliente tamalas, and enchilalas, and even made bold to take a snapshot of a drunken soldier with a black Mexican girl on his knee. But he found that the light inside the market house was two bad to make a good exposure, and so he determined later to put off a flashlight bomb, and thereby get the coveted picture.

He tried one whole day to find some one from whom he could get permission to do this thing, using up all the mongrel Spanish he knew without effect. Then, after long consideration, he decided to do a bold thing and put off a bomb without any one's permission. The man in El Paso who sold him the bomb encouraged him, and even agreed to stand for the damages if there were any. Another thing that made him bold to go ahead was the fact that three of his compatriots had rallied to his side and shown interest in the thing. An American prize-fighter from Oklahoma, a negro deserter from the United States army, and a Yale half-back all had made his acquaintance, and told him they would like to get one of the pictures if they were good.

So on a certain sunshiny summer afternoon Jones went into the dark interior of the market, and there amid soldiers, citizens, red-flaggers, revolutionists, federals, and reactionists, he put off his bomb. The detonation was deafening; the dealer in El Paso had sold him the biggest and loudest flashlight bomb he had in stock. In a moment after the flash and the detonation pandemonium broke loose in that ancient market. Women fell over their pots of enchilalas, shrieking and screaming; men swore strange oaths and ran about hither and thither. The cry, "La revolution!" (La ray-voluee-she-own,") echoed and was re-echoed about the market and the nearby streets.

Suddenly a soldier in uniform rushed up to poor frightened Jones, and seizing him by the arm, told him in Yaqui that he was under arrest. He had hardly uttered the word when Jones' compatriot, the prize-fighter, gave him a blow in the jaw that sent him sprawling. A squad of soldiers came running down the alley and burst into the market house. They were greeted with the cry, "La ray-voluee-she-own!" and with a dozen kinds of missiles hurled at their heads. The missiles included everything from small Mexican cheeses and rotten tomatoes to cobblestones and hand grenades. They at once put their pieces to their shoulders and fired over the heads of the mob, doing great damage to the roof of the building and shooting a newsboy through the foot, three miles away, in a suburb of El Paso.

The volley was answered by a volley from small firearms, fired point-blank at the soldiers, but not doing much damage. Meanwhile the pandemonium of screams and shrieks had increased, if possible. There were two human currents about that ancient, smelly market, a stream of old men, women, and children fleeing from it with all speed, and a stream of angry revolutionists, reactionists, gringoes, soldiers, red-flaggers, federals, rebels, Madero men, Orozco men, Zapata men, Huerta men, filibusters and Yaquis, all setting toward the market and swirling round it in a veritable maelstrom. At times the jam became so great that the circling had to cease, and then the groans, cries, and oaths made up for the lack of movement. It was the mob spirit of Mexico suddenly broken loose.

In the midst of all this, poor Jones was trembling in his shoes; but the Yale half-back, the hero of the prize ring, and the negro deserter all stood by him faithfully, urging him to take advantage of the following he had, and make himself dictator of Mexico.

"If I could spit Mex.," shouted the prize-fighter, "I'd be president of this country in six hours.

"Go on," shouted the Yale man. "You'll have to hold a following to you now, or you'll be torn limb from limb. Shout to them in Spanish to come on and follow you as a leader."

"Where to?" queried the trembling Jones.

"To the bull pen," yelled the prize-fighter. "We can enter it by a back gate, and it's completely deserted now; all the soldiers are either here or coming here."

"I can't shout," whispered Jones. "Somehow my voice has left me. Oh, I wish I was out o' this!"

"Tell me the words in Mexican, boss," cried the negro, "an' ah'll shout 'em good an' loud."

"Capital idea!" said the Yale man. "They'll follow our colored friend here. He's nearer their true complexion. Give him the words Jones."

In the pandemonium Jones fairly shouted the words into his colored friend's ear. He repeated them twice in Mexican. The negro took them up, and seizing a sword from an astonished officer, brandished it above his head and yelled in Mexican:

"Follow us to the bull pen, in the name of liberty, equality, and the constitution, follow General Carlos y Jonah to the bull pen!"

"Circo y Toreadores! Circo y Toros!" echoed the mob, and thronged about Jones and his little party. "Viva el General Carlos y Jonah. Viva la ray-voluee-she-own!"

In a moment there was a good strong fighting crowd at Jones's heels. The prize-fighter made a rush at two half-drunk officers, and, knocking their heads together, immediately stole their swords. Giving one to Jones and brandishing one above his head, he made great show of being a military leader. As for the Yale man, he made a regular football rush into the midst of a group of loud non-sympathizers, and having upset about half of them, he induced the other half to follow him. The troops tried to fire into the mob, but the mob was so close upon them that they fought them hand to hand and took their weapons away from them. And then besides, pistols began to appear in everybody's hands. It seemed as if all that mob was simply waiting for a leader.

"Viva el General!"

While crossing the plaza, Jones and his army recruited their forces by nearly a hundred deserters from the regular troops, who came to them full armed.

"El General y Toros does not give us enough carne (meat) in the frijoles (bean soup), and therefore we will desert him and come to you oh, great and illustrious, General y Jonah!"

When they rushed into the alley at the side of the bull pen, a clumsy federal tried to play a machine gun on them, and did great damage to the campanile of the Cathedral, a quarter of a mile away. Had this machine-gun man been shooting in a shooting gallery he would have won the stakes, for he rang every bell in that ancient tower. While he was struggling to get the range of his attackers, the prize-fighter assaulted him single-handed, while the negro and a peon who had made himself chief of staff fought off the machine-gun man's assistants. There was hard hand-to-hand fighting for five minutes, and then the bull pen was won.

The newcomers, having got both the machine guns into action, played them at the buildings over the heads of the frightened federal soldiers, as a fire company plays a hose on a building. They destroyed the roof of the city hall and of the postoffice; then they began to play their stream of lead upon the parish church from the roof of which a band of troops had begun to fire down at them. After thirty minutes of this fire hose business, General Cominas y Toros, having got to horse with about three hundred mounted troops at his heels, escaped to the mountains, and the little mud-built city became quiet.

The trolley cars from El Paso had stopped running for just one hour exactly. Then the mayor of El Paso acknowledged General Don Carlos y Jonah as commandant of Ciudad Juarez, and asked that souvenir hunters and tourists in general might be allowed to come over. The Yale half-back answered the note, Jones being too frightened to write, and told the mayor that all who wished might come over, and that they would find things perfectly safe. A few minutes later the population of Juarez was doubled by the swarm of souvenir hunters that came over. Bullets went to twenty-five cents apiece, while badly mashed ones were worth three times the money. The prize-fighter set up a souvenir stand on the corner and simply coined money. While the Yale man, the negro, whom most people believed to be the real Don Carlos y Jonah from his beautiful mahogany color, and the peon, Don Andrea y. Costa, set up a provisional government for the whole State of Chihuahua, and planned to extend their conquest finally over the whole of Mexico. Don Andrea was made Governor, while the Yale man became Secretary of War, and the negro became Secretary of the Treasury. They nominated Jones Commander-in-Chief of all the forces in the territory, but he begged to have time to consider before accepting the position, so they placed that honor on the prize-fighter.

About six o'clock that evening the General in command at Fort Bliss near El Paso sent General y Jonah a note of congratulations and brotherly regard, and the outgoing Commandant of Juarez, General y Toros, sent the following note:

"Yesterday you were an outlaw and I was a federal commander; today, I am the outlaw and you the commander. Such are the fortunes of war. Let me give you some advice; give the men plenty of meat in their bean soup, or they will desert you.

"Your brother,
"General Cominas a Pancho y Toros et Morales."

But General y Jonah was not present to receive either of these friendly notes; he had suddenly disappeared. Three days later he put in his appearance at New Orleans, but his best friends hardly knew him. According to that popular song, "His golden hair had turned to silvery gray;" but he had taken Juarez, being one of the thirteen brave men who have recently performed that feat.

The newspapers gave General Andrea y Costa the credit for taking the city; and he had the honor or dishonor of holding it for several months. The papers also reported that there were about three hundred people killed during the short engagement; but there's no trusting a newspaper report.

Where are Jones's three confederates now? you will ask. How did they succeed? The prize-fighter deserted his job as Commander-in-Chief and went to California next day. The negro and the Yale half-back stuck to their jobs a few hours too long; they are now living in close retirement in Fort Leavenworth Federal prison. Such are the fortunes of war.

* * *

A Rare Chance.

Having tried successfully various highly recommended recipes for dislodging selfish passengers from coveted seats, the woman who swung from a strap in front of the sandy man tried talking at him to her husband. As a peroration to her harangue, she said impressively:

"If you, James, should ever be piggish enough to sit down while there was a woman in the car left standing, I would never speak to you again as long as I live."

The sandy man looked up then.

"Lucky devil," he said. "Not many of us could purchase peace at that price."

* * *

Time to Intrude.

Mother—"Is Mr. Kissem in the parlor yet?"

Little Son—"Yes."

"What are they doing?"

"They are sitting a good distance apart and talking; but sister has taken off her Elizabeth ruff."

"Very well; I'll go down at once."

*

Not a Safe Sort.

She—"No. I like you very much indeed, but I can never marry a spendthrift."

He—"How do you know I am a spendthrift?"

She—"By the way you have been wasting money on me."

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THE SIGNS IN RED

Or, THE HERESIDE MYSTERY -:- By WILLIAM H. MANNING

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CHAPTER IV.

THE TERRIBLE POWER.

AT THAT moment the door opened and one of the servants confronted us, a revolver in his hand and his expression a mixture of agitation and grim determination. He brightened up as he saw us.

"Oh! so it's you, Mr. Borrowdale!" he exclaimed, plainly relieved. "I heard steps and expected to have a fight with the enemy."

"What's wrong inside, Johnson?" the master of Hereside demanded.

"Nothing, sir, that I know of. All has been quiet, and I and the other servants have watched sharply."

"Continue to watch here. Saywood, come with me!"

He swept up the stairs with flying feet, and I kept by his side. First at Miami's door and then at Mrs. Ellett's he listened intently, but there was nothing to tell of things gone wrong there. Next he went to the door of Mrs. Corbin, the housekeeper, and his knock brought that lady in a short time, a wrapper flung loosely about her spare form.

"Corbin," he said briefly, "I want you to go to the bedsides of my daughter and my aunt and make sure they are safe and well. If they are asleep, do not awaken them, but take note of their breathing and color. Be sure they are all right!"

She was not a woman given to nerves, and she listened quietly, her face steady, but a light was in her eyes that showed she was a good agent for her master's service.

"At once, sir," she returned promptly. "I'll get the little night lamp and so not arouse them unnecessarily."

We waited until she had the light, and then she entered the rooms successively. When she returned her relief was evident.

"The ladies are all right, sir," she reported. "Both sleeping like lambs, and surely nothing wrong with them. Besides that, I searched the rooms, and I can say no intruder is there."

"Thank Heaven!" Borrowdale exclaimed.

"Have those shocking men been here again, sir?" she asked.

"I don't know, Corbin. There has been mischief outside, though, just what I don't know as yet. Please aid Mr. Saywood and myself to search all other rooms. You may go over the new wing, while we take the other parts of the mansion."

The search was made and nobody found. Borrowdale's guards were alert, and they reported that no one could have passed them, and that they had seen nobody. This verdict was accepted, and we felt that, whatever had been planned, an entrance had not been made. We returned to the front door and took Johnson up again.

"Did you hear no sound outside," the master asked, "until we ran up on the piazza?"

"Not a thing, sir," Johnson answered.

"Yet that knife was affixed to the door while you stood here. Are you sure you did not go away briefly?"

"Absolutely certain, Mr. Borrowdale. I was not ten feet from the door at any time, and there was no sound—that is, nothing but the occasional creaking of that loose blind."

"I should have had that blind repaired before this. It does creak, and possibly it set you wrong, Johnson. Well, it was both skill and great luck that permitted the rascals to place the knife unseen and unheard."

"Then there is the red sign," the servant reminded, gazing at it in manifest wonder.

"Exactly! The red sign is there."

"I don't see why anybody should mark a likeness of a hand there," Johnson persisted, shaking his head.

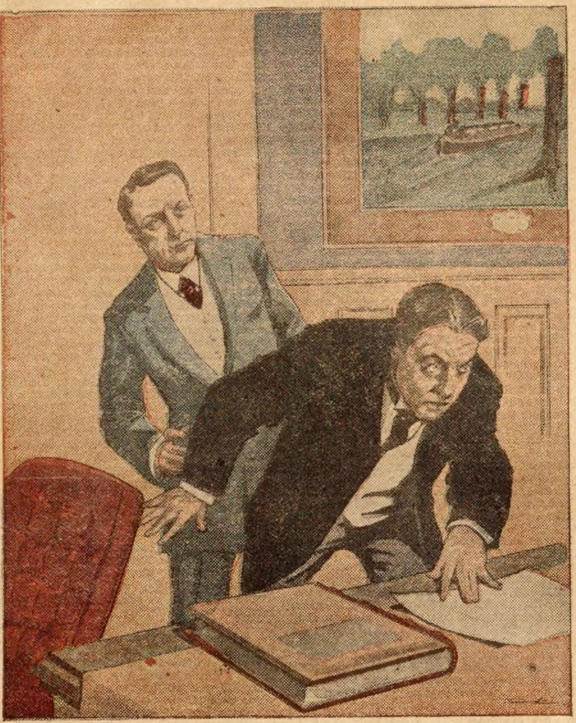
"Get water and wash the sign away. We will wait here."

The man went, and Borrowdale drew the knife from the wood.

"The fellow who placed it there took care that he made no loud sound," I said. "It was not driven in by a blow, but thrust in by pressure. That could be done with comparatively little noise."

"Yes, and the marking of the sign would be nearly noiseless, as it is done either with chalk or some peculiar pigment—more likely, I think, a pigment unfamiliar around here. Do you understand, Saywood, that they put their diabolical signs here preparatory to forcing an entrance, and then failed to get in?"

"I question that they tried. Remember that, according to the note of threat, it was the third dagger that was to begin the deadly work of their warfare. This is only the second."



On the wall was the mark in red.

"True, true! I forgot that. Probably they did not attempt an entrance, and this knife and red hand are here merely to keep my nerves on edge. It is the second threat!"

"I don't think they could have got in tonight if they had wanted to."

"Perhaps not, but I shall change our plan of campaign. Unless there is visible reason for it, only one man at the most will patrol the outlying district after this. We want our force right here, in the house and on its piazzas. We can't cover all of the farm."

Johnson came with water and a brush and set about erasing the red hand.

We now remembered Ober, and Borrowdale detached a man and directed him to accompany me to the tree where the gardener had been left. I went with some uneasiness, for, though no threat had been made against the servants, the poor fellow was exposed to the further cruelty of the unknown enemy.

Greatly to my relief we met Ober a few yards from where I had left him, and he at once reported that, though a trifle weak, he was in good shape generally.

"Tell me what happened," I directed. "How were you overcome?"

"Trickery did it, sir," the gardener answered, his voice high pitched in anger. "He hid in the bushes, and when I was passing just gave me a wallop over the head that knocked me out instanter. Then he pounced upon me, but he need not have worried. I was conscious, but the blow had taken the power of motion from me. Another man joined him, and they tied me up to that tree and gagged me. Then the sailor chap spoke to the other for the first time.

"'Now,' he said, 'to raid the house!'

"They left me, and I began to get a little life back. My bonds were too much for me, but I wanted to get that gag clear so I could yell. It was loosening when you reached here, Mr. Saywood, and it fell out of my mouth as you got me free from the bonds. When you left me I got power of motion back slowly, and finally started for the house. Do tell me if any of our folks are hurt?"

"Nobody, Ober. Now, you mention the sailor. How do you know he was that? Were not your wits muddled?"

No, only the power of bodily action. I know he was a sailor because he was dressed like one. Much like a sailor on a warship, you understand, just as he was the first time that I saw him."

"If you are sure he was the same man as he you saw with the woman, then you would know him if you saw him a third time. Eh?"

"If he was dressed as before, yes."

"But his face—would you know that?"

"I really can't say, sir," Ober admitted. "Consider the conditions the two times I saw him! Bad for future recognition, sir. This I can say, though. The sailor was not above medium height, and was stocky built, while he wore a beard. His companion was taller, slender and smooth-faced."

"Did the sailor seem to be the leader?"

"Oh, no! it was the tall man. He gave orders in a low tone, and quite in a bossy way, too. An imperious chap, you understand."

"But you fear you would not recognize them again unless it was the sailor by his dress?"

"I don't know, Mr. Saywood. I hope I could, but I really don't know."

"How about their being residents of this town?"

"Oh, no, no! They were perfect strangers."

Here was something, if not much, and I conducted Ober back to his employer. There he was questioned anew, after which Borrowdale and I consulted.

"A raid merely to put the second knife before our eyes," I said.

"If so, why was Ober assaulted?"

"As an outlying guard he might be dangerous."

"But they saw him before he detected them, and might have passed by him unseen."

"They had their return trip to make."

"Something in that, perhaps, though the best explanation seems to be that they wanted to make their blow as forceful as possible. And they did it, I confess."

"Mr. Borrowdale," I said hesitatingly, "I am reluctant to seem inquisitive, but may I ask if you have any idea who is doing all this—and why it is done?"

"The question is no more than fair. I don't know. I would as soon suspect the dead of being back of this as any living man I know. 'Tis claimed that I am rather stubborn and determined in my ways, and that may be true, but I don't know that I have a living foe. If anybody has a grudge against me, I don't know who it is nor why he hates me."

"I am aware that it is your way to fall silent when offensive persons molest you, rather than to have words with them."

"Just so, Saywood. The tongue should be servant of its possessor, but a sharp tongue is master of him. Angry words never do any good. My way is to get my rights by acts, not by idle waste of breath. Still, I've been fortunate, and have no quarrels even of act to recall."

"Then why this feud against you?"

Borrowdale carried his hand to his head and drew it across his forehead several times, while he hesitated and appeared to meditate deeply.

"I don't know," he returned, finally.

"Take that man in sailor dress! Has the sea any special meaning for you?"

"No, Saywood, no!"

He said it readily, but I marked the fact that his expression changed slightly, and it troubled me, adding as it did to previous doubts. Was the master of Hereside holding something back in the affair?

"Some men," he added, "are greatly wrapped up in the sea, even before they have seen it. It calls to them, casting a glamour over them, and they either go to it or wish they might. I've never felt the charm, but rather shrink from the dead level of the waves in calm and from the tumult of them in storm. No, no, the sea has no meaning for me."

I let it rest at that.

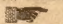
The patrol of the outlying grounds being discontinued, there was opportunity for both Borrowdale and myself to get some sleep that night, and we did it to be refreshed for the morrow.

The family met at the breakfast table, and as we had bound the servants to silence, there was nothing for Miami and Mrs. Ellett to worry over. From their point of view it had been a peaceful night because nobody had entered and disturbed them, and we did not destroy their semi-tranquillity.

After we had eaten Borrowdale went to his room. Five minutes later Esther, the maid, came and said he wanted to see me, and I went. He motioned me inside and closed the door.

"Look!" he directed, his voice intense.

I obeyed the indication of his pointing finger. On the wall was a mark in red, and it was the now familiar character.



"How did it get here?" he passionately asked. "I could swear no intruder was in the house last night, and I positively know that sign was not here when darkness fell. How could it be put here? What terrible power have those creatures got that they can defy solid wood and watching eyes? How did they get in? House-walls are not tissue paper. How, how?"

"Borrowdale," I quickly returned, "you have a traitor inside!"

CHAPTER V.

WHAT I FOUND.

THE master of Hereside shook his head impatiently.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "There is no such traitor. My servants are above suspicion, and, of course, no member of my family can be thought guilty in that way."

"The last fact I grant," I replied, "but as to the servants I must reserve final judgment. Ober believes that a young woman living in your household met the sailor the evening before the first attack. Now this red sign is here, and you say nobody could get in to mark it on the wall. How, then, can you account for it except by assuming a traitor inside your walls?"

Borrowdale hesitated, sighed and slowly replied:

"You stagger me, Saywood."

"Only one theory remains open to us."

"And that is, what?"

"You say the north wing is a hundred and thirty years old, as I recall your statement. May not the builder have constructed a secret underground passage?"

"Roger Borrowdale lived long ago, but not in an age of darkness, nor of bravos and danger. A secret passage! No, my good sir, no!"

"Then I shall be glad to hear your own explanation of how the sign in red got here," I quietly replied.

He looked at the mark, and then crossed the floor and touched his finger to it. As on a former occasion in the old wing it came away easily, leaving a stain on his skin.

"Some kind of pigment," he murmured absently. "There is an artist in town, one of our worthy citizens, and though he has never achieved success he may recognize the nature of this. I'll try him."

With his knife he scraped away all that was possible of the mark, catching it in a sheet of note-paper and then wrapping it carefully. It was a forlorn hope, but, in a way, worth trying. Still, I wondered why Borrowdale cared. For my part I had come to the conclusion that the substance used to mark the red signs was some foreign material, an idea perhaps bred by so much talk about a sailor. Certain men of lands like India, Arabia, Egypt, and like countries were as full of evil as their hides could hold, and there was a possibility that we were fighting such a gang. But why should such men come to Hereside to war upon my friends?

When Borrowdale was through with his scraping I returned to a subject that was rather getting a hold upon me.

"How about searching for an underground passage in the old wing?" I asked.

"That shall be your undertaking, Saywood," he replied, with an indulgent smile. "I have other things to do, but I give you leave to go there and turn the place upside down, upper rooms and all, to test the theory. In fact, I wish you would do it. The cellar is extensive but wholly vacant, and as the walls are of large stones, you should not have hard labor of it. If you have the patience, do the work thoroughly."

I promised, and we separated. I was soon in the old wing, and with a lantern along. This I lighted at the cellar door and went down.

It certainly was a roomy excavation. Constructed in a period when landholders raised most of their eatables, old Roger Borrowdale had given due thought to storage for vegetables, as well as to wines and the other accessories of high life in his day. This I could tell by the partition walls below, though not so much as a dried tuber or empty bottle remained to spoil the cleanliness.

It was interesting after its fashion, and that was all. I found no secret passage, and the massive stones in the foundation walls checked my zeal at the start. When I had sounded them with a hammer and found solidity everywhere, I gave over the unprofitable task.

I was on the point of giving up wholly when I recalled Borrowdale's request that I should examine the upper rooms as well, and I left the cellar for that region.

Except where the rooms were large and once directly used by the family, the divisional scheme was erratic, causing numerous narrow halls and obscure recesses, and I had a rare time looking into these, sounding the walls and prying for secret doors and possible cunning springs like those I had sometimes read about.

My discovery came when I was wrenching at a board in the wainscoting under a flight of stairs, and trying to decide whether it was the way to a mysterious passage or merely a warped and simple part of the whole. Prying stoutly, I finally tore it entirely away, and so abruptly, when it did come, that it toppled over against me. Something else came away, too. Half a dozen bits of paper slipped from the recess back of the board, fluttering down at my feet.

All seemed to be fragments, and I was about to ignore them, when I caught sight of that which seized sharply upon my attention. A bit of paper the size of half of my hand showed writing in black ink, and in the midst of the lines was something not a word. Picking the slip up, I easily read everything.

"Believe me, my dear kinsman, you have not seen the last of me. The sea buries its dead, but not its living, and he who survives the bitterest gales will endure to meet his own again and bless them—or curse them! The old adage says that he who was born to be hanged will never drown, and unless the hemp is spun for my neck, you will see me again. You remember my old method of announcing my coming.

"When you see that again, in a letter or chalked upon your wall, be sure I am on my way and near. And you will see it! Years may pass and the hope spring green and delightful in your craven heart that the sea has swallowed its loving son, but the hope will perish as perishes the worm. I shall come, and I shall remember! You did an ill deed to yourself, kinsman, when you tried to grind me in the dust under your patrician heel, and struck the blow in my back that made me——"

Here the writing ended. It was no more than the middle part of the original sheet, the upper and lower portions being torn away, so I possessed neither beginning nor end of the letter.

But what interested me most, just then, was that on this paper, discolored and unquestionably old, was the same sign that had figured so much in the last two days. What I had seen marked in pigment was not the first appearance of the red hand at Hereside mansion.

Standing there with the thing in my grasp, I recalled Borrowdale's vacillating conduct and my suspicion that he was not telling me all he knew. Undoubtedly, I reasoned, he had recognized the sign as soon as he saw it, and this had been the cause of his agitation and indecision. Later, his firm will had asserted itself, but if he was prepared to fight, he was not ready to confide in me. Why, unless it was a family secret?

It was not until I had mastered every line that I remembered I was violating a sacred rule of intercourse among men by reading another's letter, but the red hand had lured me on and into forgetfulness. Now that I had innocently gone so far, I did not hesitate to seek deliberately for more, the damage already being done. I examined all the other torn pieces of paper, but they were inconsequential and had no connection with what I held.

A family secret, and a family grudge. The writer had hated the person he addressed, and he claimed to have been wronged, but my sympathy did not go out to him. His words were those of a bitter, sneering nature, and I felt it safe to assume that he deserved all the misfortunes he had met with.

He received no pity from me, but, rather, his words filled me with utter loathing and detestation. I seemed to see him, my imagination picturing a man dark, swarthy, quick of motion, keen of face, and slight but wiry of build—then, as I dreamed the vain dream, I remembered the slender man who, according to Ober, had been the leader when he and the sailor had assaulted the worthy gardener. And the writer of the letter had called himself the son of the sea.

I fell to examining the paper critically. How old was it? Surely not a product of the early part of the previous century, for then men wrote mostly on blue paper, and as certainly not made since the twentieth century began. My decision halted at fifteen to twenty-five years back. The malevolent unknown had written that, though years might elapse, he would come again. Was it not true that he had come?

My hammer, left insecure, fell with a slight clatter, and I confess that I jumped aside in nervous terror. The man who would come again sat heavily on my spirits.

Brought back to practical life, I studied the problem of what I should do with my discovery. Under other conditions the whole lot should have been turned over to Borrowdale, but I was certain the hostile letter would tell him nothing new, and I was liable to put myself into an unpleasant position. Who but myself could realize how innocently I had read the private letter of another?

I settled it by replacing the dislodged board and lightly renailing it at the bottom, after which I dropped all the written matter behind it. When a few more nails were driven, everything was as I had found it at the beginning, and the threat that was couched in a sneer and a taunt was again in darkness, shut in as before.

I had lost heart for searching for secret passages, but I settled down to the employment again as a duty. Half an hour later I was ready to admit defeat, though not so ready to affirm that there was no passage. If there was none, how explain the latest intrusion of Borrowdale's room? I returned to him and reported ill results, and again he smiled indulgently.

"Roger Borrowdale was not the man to construct secret ways about his house," he said quietly. "I sent you simply because I knew you would find nothing. We are on a very commonplace, twentieth-century standing, except that mystery oozes from every pore of the situation."

CHAPTER VI.

ACTIVE FOES.

WITH this Borrowdale turned suddenly toward me. "Do you remember," he asked, "what we were to do tomorrow?"

"Yes," I replied.

"We were to start for Pennsylvania to attend the stockholders meeting of the Terolake Zinc Mining Company. Naturally, I shall not go. My duty is here."

"And mine," I exclaimed, "if you will let me stay."

"Frankly, it would be a severe blow to me if I were deprived of your help and counsel. If you are willing to make the sacrifice——"

"It will be no sacrifice. There are enough other stockholders to do the business, and our stake there is too small to worry about. The important thing about the zinc matter is that it led you to invite me here, and that means a lot. I'll stay!"

"Thank you! Candidly, I am worried over things here, especially as the mystery is so deep. I must protect Miami and my aunt, and my own safety interests me not a little. Except for my brother and his two sons—you have met them; you know—I am the last male of the Borrowdales."

It was a casual remark, and he turned away after making it, little suspecting how much it meant to me. I knew the relatives he had mentioned, and knew them to be above reproach. If there was no other living male, what about the revengeful being I had built up on the foundation of my discoveries in the old wing? My theory had received a check.

A little later, while I was thoughtfully pacing the upper piazza, Miami joined me, coming from the inner hall. She usually carried sunshine and brightness in her face, but now, though she smiled bravely, I knew she was not in a mood to think of light things. Still, she nodded in the curious, fascinating way she had, and spoke easily.

"All alone, Mr. Saywood?" she asked.

"Before, yes, though not now," I returned, willing to cheer her up if I could.

"I am glad," she said, and then, going to the piazza rail she looked over. This done, she turned swiftly back and faced me again. "Please come with me," she continued. "If we meet auntie in the hall, defer what I ask of you."

Increased uneasiness fell upon me, for it was clear that she, too, had something of gravity to mention. Giving her a brief reply, I followed where she led. Entering her sleepingroom she pointed a finger and said:

"Look!"

I obeyed, and one glance told the story. From the chandelier dangled a bunch of knotted rope, and it had the shape that had grown hideous to me, being a duplicate of what Ober had found in the field. The hand was once more in evidence, made from the rope.

I gazed in such consternation that I forgot to act a part, and it was not until the intensity of her analytical regard beat into the barrier of my abstraction that my wits served me.

"How," she finally asked, "did that get here?"

"Really, I don't know. What," I added, "do you call it?"

"I call it the mate of the sign in red, and the exact copy of the knotted rope found by the gardener. Oh! don't think, Mr. Saywood, that father and you can hide the secrets of this house. When he pledged the servants to silence they came at once to me—or, rather, one of them did—and they know more than has been told them. Some one of them has spied, and there is little here that is not common property to all except Aunt Ellett. Fortunately, she is ignorant of the worst. But I am not—oh! no, no!"

She was a new Miami then. Standing firmly on her dainty feet she drove her words home with subdued impetuosity. There was no tremor of her face and no waver of her eyes, but I realized that we could hardly keep her in ignorance longer. She was too bright and alert, too much a Borrowdale.

"What do you know?" I asked tentatively.

"In a vague way, about the signs marked in red, the sailor and the sailor's knot—if such it is—and the danger that hovers over us. I know too little to use my brains to good purpose, but too much to be ignored when every fighter is needed here."

"Have you seen your father?" I asked lamely.

"I am seeing you in preference. Let us come to business without delay. A little while ago I found this rope hand attached to the chandelier. When it was done, I don't know, but it was not here when I retired last night. Perhaps it was tied there during the night, or maybe since then. I don't know. But how did it get here, and who did it?"

Seeing that it would be folly to try to deceive one who knew so much, I dropped the evasion immediately.

"For my part I don't know," I answered. "Do you? Have you any theory?"

"Just now I have none, but one must be found, and it must be carried forward to a revelation. With the house guarded like a fort in war time, this has been attached to the fixture above. Has somebody really entered, or have we a traitor, an ally of the unknown villains right here in the house?"

It was precisely the belief I had tried to present convincingly to Borrowdale, but I passed that by for the moment.

"Miss Miami, I don't know your servants except casually. You do, and your opinion is worth far more than mine—indeed, I have no way of guessing. Who do you think did it?"

"To be frank, I am utterly perplexed. I could have staken everything on the loyalty and honor of our help, but this—this is not to be put aside as nothing. Who is the traitor?"

"You are sure you do not suspect any one definitely?"

"Nobody."

"I have been considering the old wing, a house built in former days when secret passages were not unknown. I suppose there is no forgotten underground way in that quarter where an outsider could enter and do this?"

"Why, dear me, such a thing seems impossible! Wait, though! It seems to me I have heard Aunt Ellett say there was once a legend that old Roger Borrowdale did construct such a secret way when he built the house."

She paused as her father's voice rose from the lower floor, calling me. I stepped into the hall, and, still summoned by him, descended. He was at the foot of the stairs, his face strangely white, and he silently led me into the library and closed the door.

"I have just received an extraordinary letter," he announced curtly. "I want you to read it and give your opinion."

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER THREAT.

BORROWDALE extended the sheet of note-paper he had been holding, and I found writing upon it. It began and ended abruptly.

"You have not seen fit to acknowledge the former letter I sent to you, which was a grave mistake on your part. I certainly made it clear in that communication that I was not to be trifled with, and that my demands must be complied with. I have my large force of men on my hands, and long delay will to the total of my demands, f vexing me by your silence. consent to have my feelings am a very sensitive person— dale?

"Now, for the last time, y my demands, or it will be s that even I shall pity you. do as I asked you before. weekly newspaper is publish from now. If you do not see a letter as before ordered, advertisement saying that you w me. This is the last call. Be wa"

I looked up from the unsigned letter. Borrowdale was still standing, and the whiteness of his face was still manifest, but his expression was hard and not a feature trembled.

"Well?" he questioned grimly.

"This paper," I replied, "is from the same lot on which the warning note attached to the knife was written."

"Yes."

"And the writing is the same."

"Yes, the same person penned both. Now, I never received the previous letter he claims to have sent, so there is no more to be said about it. This one I have. What, in your opinion, does the scoundrel demand?"

"Money! He is a blackmailer," I said decidedly.

"Just so! A blackmailer, or, to put it into more blunt words, the most despicable creature on earth. Blackmail is murder weakened by cowardice and colored by mental venom. Oh! I could throttle the beast with right good will!"

The master of Hereside took a turn across the room, closing and unclosing his hands in a fierce way, and it dawned upon me that his pallor rose not from terror, but from rage and indignation.

I stood staring at the letter, reading it over a second time and studying its terms.

"Money is not mentioned here," I pursued. "Do you think this omission due to caution or something else? If he has once put such a demand into words, why be too timid to repeat it plainly?"

"It's a common practice for men receiving such communications to tear them to pieces at once, disdaining the affair. If I had received the first letter and destroyed it, then there would be no available call in writing for the law to act upon. A wise knave, our foe!"

He walked about again, and his silence gave me a chance to look further into the present letter. At one point the words recalled another writing vividly to my mind, for here, as well as there, was the use of light words when a scoff and a sneer certainly lay back of them.

Darkly threatening as the total was, the unknown mentioned his "sensitive" nature, and that he was now "vexed"—something that was very much like the torn missive I had found behind the loose board in the old house. The evil-minded man of mystery loomed like a cry for destruction.

Borrowdale suddenly came and seated himself at the table.

"I shall not advertise in the local paper!" he exclaimed stubbornly. "I'll fight the creature in the way I'm already doing, and I'm not sure but I shall win."

"Do you know," I pursued, "this does not seem like a piece that dovetails with what has been seen here lately. It looks merely like a demand for money, whereas, previous events threatened death to you and your women."

"The two don't seem to harmonize," he agreed.

"Can it be there are two parties working simultaneously against you? But, no! That looks absurd."

"Looks don't count, but you can safely wager there's but one gang. Now that I consider further, I'm not so sure this is a call for money. It may not be blackmail."

"Then what does the gang want?"

Borrowdale was slow in replying to my question. He drummed idly upon the table, considering the perplexity. I let him think undisturbed, and this gave me time to meditate, too. Never before had I been over-imaginative, but, now, I recalled the letter behind the board with singular persistency, and fancy added a slender, black-haired, swarthy man, who was gliding soft-footed in the thick of our affairs and waiting his chosen time to strike the final blow. Then I stirred sharply, ashamed of my uncurbed fancy. For a practical man I was absurd. I shut out the dark presence.

"Saywood," my host finally spoke earnestly, "perhaps you would be justified in thinking that I am keeping some misdemeanor of mine hidden from you, for such warfare as this usually has a basis of fact, but, in all sincerity, I don't know why this campaign is on. I have wronged no one, so why should any one try to wrong me? I am in total darkness, and don't know either the men or their object. Further, I find it impossible to guess."

"Our way is to seize the men and learn their grudge later."

"Ye-es," he returned slowly. "But we must protect Miami and my aunt, first of all. If, in doing it, we catch our enemies, well and good."

"Borrowdale," I exclaimed, "I am not satisfied with this policy of inactivity by day. There are wide woods on your

(Continued on page nineteen.)

THE MOUNTAIN'S VOICE

Or, T

[Copyrig

By ERNEST W. NICHOLS

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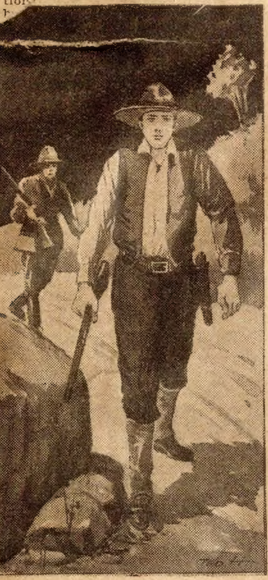


"Come on!"

"WE DON'T usually employ men without a clearance from other lines," explained Chief Dispatcher Brown. "However, we need a man to work nights down at QN tower in the mountains. If you want that, I'll give you a trial."

"I'll go," returned the tall, slender bit of manhood, a look of gratitude replacing that of hope and hunger.

Brown turned to his desk, filled out a pass in the name of Fred Deming, and handed it to the new operator.

"Catch No. 5 at 3:30. That will put you there at eight o'clock. I'll wire the day man to look out for you."

"Thank you, sir. I'll be there on time." The door closed gently behind the young man as he withdrew.

"The twelfth man this year on that job," Brown mused, turning to make a note on the pad at his elbow. "Some time I'll just run down there to spend the night, and see what it is that drives them away."

Fred Deming, suitcase in hand, dropped from the steps of the smoker, gazed about in bewilderment for several minutes, then turned his face toward the tiny red block light in the tower, a train length away. It was the only visible thing by which he might be guided through the dense fog about him.

Stumbling along over uneven ties and bumping into a clearance post or two, he at last reached QN tower. The day man stood at the door to welcome him. A real hearty welcome it was; the grip given Deming's hand being a mixture of pressure and pull equal to that used by Western real estate dealers for the colonist.

"Come right in, old man," greeted Davis, the overworked man of the day shift. "It's more agreeable inside."

"Thanks," returned the new arrival, looking about the office. "Sorry to stick you an hour, but could not help it."

"Oh, that's all right; I'm used to it. Have to be stuck about once or twice a month. Looks like the Chief cannot get a man to stick here."

"Why?" eagerly questioned Deming.

"Search me. They all put up various excuses, but the two most commonly advanced are that the place is unhealthy, and that there are spooks in the neighborhood."

"Flag the spooks!" derisively returned the seeker of information, shedding his coat and glancing over the block sheet.

Davis smiled broadly as he saw Deming place a big 45-caliber Colts on the table beside him. He had seen others go through the same performance. He pushed the transfer toward Deming to be signed.

"I hope you stick. It's a snap for you if you do; no easier job on the whole line."

"Where can I get board?" questioned the night man after signing the transfer in a neat round hand and pushing it toward the day operator.

"Just around the point of the mountain, there, at the house of Mr. Cyphers. Cheap and good feeding, too."

"Fine. I'll break the speed record for country ham and fried chicken tomorrow morning. The tonnage record will be in danger, too."

"Well, I'll be going. Luck to you!" Davis paused just for an instant to take another brief look at his relief, then closed the office door behind him.

For three consecutive nights everything ran smoothly at QN tower. Business was good on the division, preventing the night men on the south end from having time to get lonesome. Then things began to happen almost every night, which soon brought to Deming the usual haggard, unsettled look acquired by each of his predecessors before calling for his time.

Davis was quick to detect these symptoms, for he had seen them many times. He liked Deming because of his frank manner and businesslike methods, and for these reasons, he felt deeply interested in keeping him with him.

One particularly gloomy morning, about a week later, the day man saw that the situation was growing serious. In fact, he thought, perhaps, that Deming had already asked for relief and his pay check.

"Well, how do you like the work by this time?" he asked, trying to conceal his deep interest.

"None too well."

"Why not? You have been getting along just splendidly with the work. Any trouble with the dispatcher?"

"No. I just don't like the location."

"Has that Cyphers girl given you a cold deal, too?"

"Not a bit of it. In fact, she is the only thing that holds me here now."

"Well, that's enough for any man. A pretty mountain lassie with sparkling eyes, dimpled cheeks, and hair like silken floss." Davis laughed. "What more could you ask?"

"Say," blurted Deming, abruptly reaching the pith of his thoughts, "is there any such thing as a panther, a wild cat, or a cross between the two that roves these hills?" The speaker pointed out the window toward a peak which slanted down precipitously within a hundred yards of the tower.

"Certainly not," Davis replied emphatically. "Why do you ask such a question?"

"Well, there's something that makes the most unearthly noise up there that I ever heard. It usually comes at intervals through the night, and sounds like a mixture of the crying voice of a woman in distress, a man drowning, a screech owl, and a moaning dog."

"That's news to me. I never heard of it before. There is an old deserted mine shaft that runs from the cove just above the Cyphers place to the other side of that point you see. There are two or three holes dug down to it for air passages. It is said the old mine is haunted by the spirits of dead miners who were entombed by an explosion years ago, but you certainly do not believe that?"

"No. The sound comes nearer, then fades away gradually, until it can hardly be heard. It does not sound like a human being."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go down the valley to my home for supper tonight, then come back and stay with you until midnight. We will see what we can find out about it."

"All right," Deming agreed, then quickly added another query. "Do you know anything about Mildred Cyphers?"

"Very little further than that she is a very bright girl, well bred and well read. She is rather adventurous and daring, and as full of life and fun as any one could be. Are you a victim, too?" Davis laughed outright, as he thought of the many night men who had come to him for counsel in the wooing of this mischievous bit of femininity.

"No, I'm no victim, I'm a downright slave—that's all," Deming confessed frankly.

"Every operator who comes here falls in love with her at first sight," Davis explained, "but none of them ever won her. They were not brave and daring enough to measure up to her requirements."

Now in a deep study, the night man sauntered toward the door. "I must be going," he said, "I'll see you about six o'clock."

"All right."

Davis turned to the telegraph table in deep thought. He felt sure that he had solved the problem of keeping a night operator at QN tower. He would solicit the aid of Mildred Cyphers, his sister-in-law.

Six o'clock found Deming entering the tower to relieve Davis. In one hand he carried his midnight lunch; in the other a heavy Winchester rifle belonging to his landlord. A determined expression shot from his eyes, checking promptly the outburst of laughter which almost convulsed Davis, who looked on the spook affair as a huge joke.

"Hello!" greeted the day man, after choking down his mirth for a minute. "I see you are prepared for trouble tonight."

"Yes, I'm going to get that beast, or whatever it is roving that peak."

"Well, I'll run down to supper and get my artillery. I'll be back about nine o'clock. It's going to be a pretty moonlit night, so we can easily see what we are doing."

"Yes; all right."

Deming busied himself for the next three hours, but found time for a brief conversation with the dispatcher, in which he arranged for an hour's leave of absence, and in sharpening up a ten-inch hunting knife he had also borrowed from his landlord.

When Davis returned, his appearance had been so changed by the addition of leggings, a cartridge belt, and corduroy hunting suit, that Deming could not help but admire the outfit.

"Ready?" questioned Davis, dropping down on the edge of the telegraph table languidly.

"Sure. The second trick man said I could be out for an hour between eleven and twelve o'clock, but we had better wait until we hear the thing scream before we undertake to locate it."

"Well, I'd figured on getting home before midnight, but guess another hour will not worry my wife."

Davis moved across to the little oil-burning bracket lamp, and settled down in a chair to rest. Outside of a few comments on the trains on the division, the men had little to say. Eleven o'clock arrived slowly, the day man being rather sleepy as the clock announced the hour.

"Let's go," he drawled disinterestedly, picking up his gun. Deming reached for the Winchester he had secured for the occasion, and joined his companion outside the office.

"Now, listen for a few minutes before we start," suggested Deming. "Maybe we can hear it."

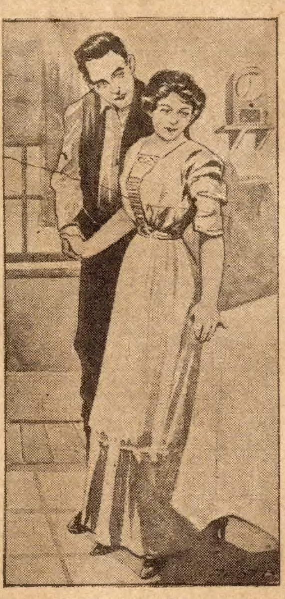
They heard it! Cold chills took possession of the day man, while his companion perspired freely. Neither spoke for a minute. Again it came, screeching, muttering, growling, wailing, and ending in a sound similar to a prolonged grunt.

"Where is it?" asked Davis, in a whisper, thanking the darkness of night for concealing his blanched face.

"Right over there on that peak," explained Deming. "Come on."

"You go ahead; I'll follow you."

Nothing more was said as they plodded along through saw briers and underbrush for about a hundred yards. Here Deming stopped and pointed toward the side of the peak. "It's right up there," he whispered. Again they moved ahead.



"What's the answer?"

Reaching the point indicated they paused only a few feet from the third air shaft of the old mine, which had become almost hidden by ivy, and stood glancing cautiously about them. Again Deming raised his hand and started to point to a clump of brush twenty feet away, but he never completed the performance.

"Ohweeooo — ahweeooh — iieeuhhhh," thundered the sound from the shaft.

The two men did not wait for the finish of the wailing, muffled sound. Deming turned bravely and pumped fifteen leaden missiles into the little patch of ivy, then emptied three chambers of his revolver in the same direction, before he looked around to see what Davis was doing. He had disappeared completely!

"Davis!" the deserted man called lustily again and again, but in vain. There was no response.

Now, both angry and driven to desperation by being deserted, Deming pulled out the long knife, and with it in one hand and his revolver in the other, walked up to the thick bushes, peering into them carefully, expecting to find the body of some huge animal riddled with lead.

But nothing could be seen in the shadows beneath the thick foliage; neither did any further sound emanate from the dense thicket. Baffled, yet determined, he turned toward the office, wending his way through the same rough stretch of briers and underbrush. When he reached the tower there was no evidence that Davis had preceded him.

What had become of his companion he did not know, and he cared less; for he surmised the truth, that Davis had not stopped until he reached home.

"Good morning Mr. Deming," Mildred cooed sweetly, as the tired night man stepped inside the gate some hours later.

"Hello, little girl!" came the tender response, as Deming dropped the butt of the heavy rifle against the ground. The girl advanced coyly with a tiny buttonhole bouquet of a single rosebud and sprig of honeysuckle, which she pinned to the lapel of his coat.

"Been hunting?" she queried, turning toward the old-fashioned two-story frame house which had been the home of the Cyphers for three generations.

"No," Deming said slowly, trying to hide his adventure of the previous night.

"What have you been doing with daddy's old gun?"

"Just been out shooting at a target."

Mildred cast a searching glance at her lover, half doubt, half pity. He felt it, too, for his face burned with a flush, and he was afraid he had been trapped by something Davis might have told her. Together they entered the broad hallway leading back to the diningroom.

"Mother went over to sister's this morning," the girl explained. "I will serve your breakfast."

The hungry man dropped into his accustomed seat, watching her in doubt and admiration as she disappeared into the kitchen for his breakfast.

"Would you like to go out for a ride this morning?" she asked, returning a few minutes later with a steaming hot breakfast.

"I'll go anywhere to be with you," came the earnest reply, in a tone of unquestioned meaning.

"I told daddy to bring Dicky, my burro, down from the mine by nine o'clock. If you really want to go, I'll have him furnish you a horse."

"I'll be more than glad to go," he assured her.

At this juncture the sound of heavy boots worn by a sturdy mountaineer came from the back porch opposite the diningroom.

"Oh, Milly!" the head of the family called through the partly open window.

"Yes, daddy?" Mildred answered.

"Dickie is dead. Your ride is off."

"What's that?" she questioned doubtfully.

"Dickie died with six 45-caliber Winchester bullets planted in his carcass. You know what I told you about your fool idea of scaring those night operators up at the tower."

Mildred blushed deeply, then cried softly, as Deming stared at her in wide-mouthed astonishment while he grasped something of the purport of the conversation.

"I told you not to hide that old donkey in the air shaft of the mine, no matter if he did have a cracked voice and could scare people sick with it."

No reply came from Mildred, as the tears trickled down her dimpled cheeks. Deming now saw where he was to come in for censure, and perhaps the loss of his most coveted prize, Mildred.

Through the window came the laughter of the old man, as he thought of Deming borrowing his gun the previous day. Mildred peeked through her fingers to see if the man at the table was laughing, too, but he was not—he dared not.

Pointing an accusing finger at her as he caught the sparkle of her eye peeping at him, he leaned toward her with the demand:

"What is the answer? Are you going to marry me?"

"Yes, you old murderer!"

* * *

Two of a Kind.

One night Pat was strolling around a show, when the showman called him and told him that a lion had just died, and offered him £5 to take its place, and Pat, being out of work, jumped at the chance.

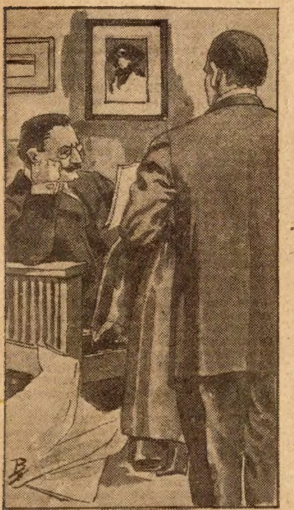
As soon as he was in the cage, another door opened and in walked a tiger. Pat was so frightened that he backed to the other side of the cage, trembling all over.

When he had given up all hope, a voice from the tiger exclaimed: "Stop trembling, Pat, I'm an Irishman myself."

Doris Lyndahl's Flight

Or, The Girl-Wife's Test

By Mason Ray



"I have honored you, and my wife, by asking what I am to believe?"

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CHAPTER IV.

TWO hours after the discovery of Doris's flight, Gordon, at his rooms in Chicago, received a telegram stating the fact. He was made to understand that his wife had hired a neighbor's team, had driven late at night to the station, purchased a ticket for Chicago, and that her address would be known to Heath Merrill. The condensed statements were exceedingly puzzling, but added to the intelligence just received by registered letter they became maddening.

Not for a moment did Gordon believe in Madam Lyndahl's version of the distressing affair. But, to his already overburdened mind, arose visions of a discordant household. He recalled Doris's wish to accompany him, and believed she had persisted despite his denial. He was very angry at this exhibition of childishness. Moreover, he hated scenes, and the affair approached the spectacular. Since his wife was coming she must be met. Therefore he crowded ten hours' work into four, and frowningly visited the M. & N. E. depot. The first and second west-bound trains arrived consecutively, but no Doris appeared. Anger changed to apprehension. He, perforce, concluded to observe the request that urged him to interview Merrill. Hiring a cab he speedily found himself at the publisher's home, and his name insured him ready entrance, although the hour was somewhat late. Gordon Lyndahl was no diplomat. His methods were direct. Therefore, when he was ushered into the publisher's presence, he made the entire matter clear. Having stated his quest with brevity and point, he handed Merrill the letter registered by Jud.

Heath read the astonishing communication written by Madam Lyndahl, then the later telegram. His stern, dark face was fully exposed to the light of his library table incandescent. Across this exposed visage Gordon saw pass in turn amazement, indignation, anxiety. Dick, sitting near by with his books, failed to catch the full meaning of the strange scene. But he understood enough to know that his friend was in trouble and that his uncle was held responsible.

"I trust," the publisher said, and his black eyes met Gordon's steadily and sternly, "that you fail to share any part of this hallucination."

"I am here to ask you exactly what to believe and not to believe," Gordon returned. His gaze was also level, penetrating, and stern.

"Then," said Merrill, ironically mentioning details in their order, "I'm supposed to have maintained a correspondence with her under the protecting cover of Jud Kilbeam's name; I'm supposed to have provided her with cash of which the inclosed check is a sample; lastly, I'm supposed to have her concealed here in this city." He paused.

"I have honored you—and my wife—by asking you what and how much I am to believe," Gordon reminded him coldly.

"Nothing that is discreditable to Mrs. Lyndahl," Merrill said with emphasis. "Much of this letter sounds like the insane ravings of one demented. Other parts record the observations of a person with a distorted vision. Wrong motives have been attributed to innocent actions. This check is an example. The amount named was paid to Doris Lyndahl in return for illustrations intended for a lately printed book. She has used a country setting. Doubtless you'll recognize bits of scenery from your own woods and streams."

As he spoke, Merrill opened an advance copy of the volume that Doris had illustrated and handed it to her husband.

"During two years she has supplied drawings, magazine covers, and other book illustrations. Her trial work was submitted for my consideration when I visited your home. Her sketches showed talent and training. Because of my position I was able to offer her the immediate employment that would otherwise come slowly to a beginner. She adopted as a nom de plume the name of your guide. Her letters were addressed to the same name. Her object, I believe, was to save your 'illustrious name' from publicity."

Merrill's words stung like a lash. Gordon's countenance expressed angry amazement, but conviction.

"You may recall your heated statement in which you derided public women, in which you declared that if you had been so unfortunate as to have one for a wife, you'd seek freedom. Furthermore, your mother strongly disapproves of your wife's love for art. Altogether, she seemed driven to a certain amount of concealment. But the name she chose made a hit. Her work is in demand. My sub-editor, Tracy, conducted most of this business correspondence. Lately, at the artist's request, we stopped payment on this check and sent currency in exchange for this and other unnegotiated paper. The currency, also at her request, was enclosed in a certain book she ordered. That is all."

Lyndahl stared at the speaker as if he would search his soul. At the close he sat for a time with bowed head, thinking.

"Doris was wrong in concealing her work, doubly wrong in hiding under an assumed name," he finally said, with deep resentment. "I hate subterfuge."

"And you hate talented women," reminded his friend.

"I want a woman to be domestic in her tastes," corrected Gordon. "I can't understand why Doris conceived the idea of selling her talent. You have made part of the matter plain, but you fail to throw light on the subject of my wife's alleged infatuation."

Heath Merrill's countenance became ashen with wrath. His black eyes blazed. His right hand clinched. But when he answered his tone stung like wind-driven sleet.

"Mrs. Lyndahl's honor requires no defense. Her good name needs no championship—of mine. If my hostess cared for my welfare while I was a guest in your home, I am grateful. But I certainly was not in my room when she was supposed to have entered it."

Dick's presence had been forgotten. The lad had, however, heard and been distressed by the scene. Now he could keep silence no longer.

"You went hunting for an hour or two that day, Uncle Heath, and I was trapping. It's the time you objected to—to my presence at the supper table. Fact is, I caught an animal that was worse 'en a muskrat took with hydrophobia. I hunted a club to put it out o' misery. If that stick had been long enough, I'd been all right. Anyway, I was all wrong. Mrs. Doris was near by painting. I yelled for her to get me some clothes out of our trunk. She's a brick. She did and never snitched. I buried the others, but I thought I'd never get that skunk out of my system. I didn't want you to know about it and guy me, Uncle Heath, but I'd rather tell than make trouble for Mrs. Doris. As it was, she left her sketchbook on your table. It nearly gave us away, but I got it for her so nobody ever noticed it. And now I've told."

The two men stared at Dick while he gave his lucid explanation of the day's incident. Merrill was the first to comment.

"Then Mrs. Lyndahl never submitted her sketches for my approval," said he. It placed the affair in an entirely new light. "The whole affair was accidental. It seems we're wasting time over the proverbial molehill. Dick's evidence brings down the whole fabric like a house of cards. Possibly," he dryly suggested, "it would be best for her husband to look after her present welfare and let the matter of the lady's honor lapse."

Gordon, crimson-faced, was on his feet. "I'm a fool," said he, "and I owe you an apology, Merrill. Unquestionably my wife's name is not and never has been endangered. Pardon me for intruding. As Doris is doubtless waiting for me at some hotel which she failed to mention, I'll bid you good evening."

When again alone in his cab, Gordon's state of mind was that of one awakened from protracted sleep. For the first time in his life he was thoroughly alive to domestic issues. He reviewed the three years of his marriage as if each day was thrown on a screen. Madam Lyndahl's ruling passion of strong mastery assumed its correct significance. He knew that his own freedom from this government was due to his own strong will. But he was aware that Doris's timid, sensitive nature could preserve no individuality between the upper millstone of his imperious dictates and the nether millstone of his mother's ruling. Yet Doris possessed depth of character. She would follow her inclinations as naturally and forcefully as plants turn to light. But the thought of her deception angered him. He believed she should have cultivated self-assertion. It would have saved him an embarrassing half-hour. Anything that stirred the quiet pool of his existence was unwelcome. He'd make known his displeasure; after that life would proceed harmoniously on slightly different lines.

Thus pondering, he visited in turn each hotel Doris would be at all likely to patronize. At none of them was registered the name he sought. At midnight he returned to his rooms amazed and disheartened.

"Perhaps," he mused, "she's gone out to her Aunt Katherine's. If she left home in a fit of temper she may have gone there to talk it out."

Consequently he caught the early train for the suburb where resided Doris's maternal aunt and only living relative. Mrs. Arnold met him at the door and gazed at him wonderingly above her spectacles while he told his errand.

"Doris here! Why do you ask? Don't you know where she is?" the old lady demanded. As she had exactly touched the point, he unreservedly confided the whole matter.

"I've guessed for some time that Doris was unhappy," Mrs. Arnold grimly commented at the end. "But I'm equally certain that she worships you. She's head over ears in love with her husband."

"Then," cried Gordon, "why in Heaven's name should she leave me?"

"I'm only guessing," Doris's aunt reminded him. "But I've glimpsed between the lines of my niece's letters and I believe——"

"What?" demanded Gordon. "Just what do you believe? I must know the whole."

"I believe," the lady finished curtly, with a quick glance at Doris's husband, "that my niece has had too much mother-in-law."

During the long railway journey to his home Gordon had abundant leisure to consider unwelcome truths. His object was now to question Jud and find out if the guide was still in Doris's confidence. At the home station Jud awaited his coming according to telegraphed instructions. The team stood in the rapidly thawing slush of early spring, and as sleighing was impossible, their driver had hitched them to a light wagon. During the first flush of his anger Gordon would have greeted his guide with intolerant condemnation. But two days and nights of intense anxiety had modified his bitterness. Instead of recriminations, he greeted Jud quietly, and when far out on the icy roads he pointedly asked:

"Did Mrs. Lyndahl leave directions with you concerning her destination?"

"No," answered Jud, and his tone was convincing.

"Tell me of the letters and the use of your name," next commanded his employer.

"Mis' Lyndahl asked if she could use my name on her pictures," Jud narrated, after a keen look at Gordon's haggard visage. "I told her she's welcome if she thought it fit. Then she explained that writers often use what she called a feather-something——"

"Nom de plume," interpolated Gordon.

"That's it. And bimeby books and letters come to that address, an' she asked would I as soon hand 'em to her direct. I did so, for I thought 'twas her business. Then the missis got suspicious and hired Mis' Webb to send the mail by Jake. After that, if you'll excuse plain speaking, there was the devil to pay."

Lyndahl said nothing in response. The rest of the drive was unbroken silence, save for Jud's remarks to the hurrying team. Before the end of the hour Gor-

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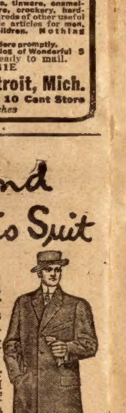

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don faced Madam Lyndahl across the wide hearth in front of the crackling fire.

"We have both blundered, blundered inexcusably, horribly," he declared bitterly, after the first greeting. His eyes were dull with a sleepless vigil. His head ached. His heart was heavy with Goriety.

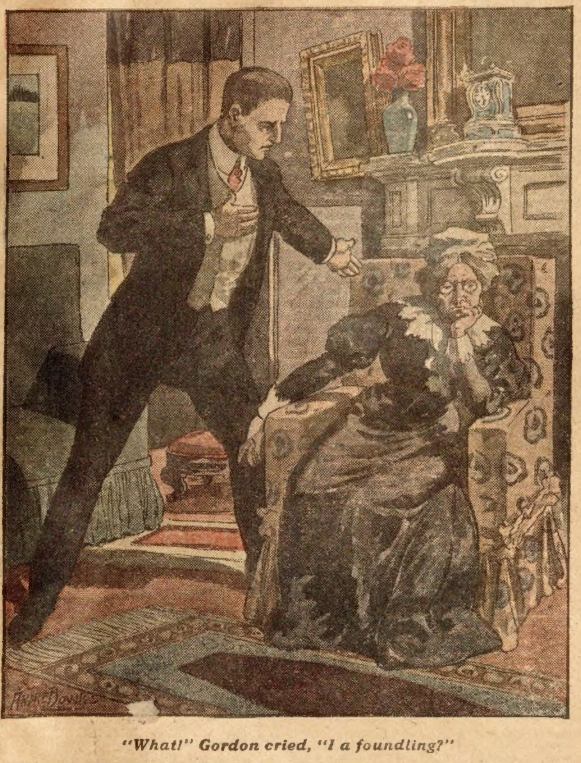
"Doris is a headstrong ingrate," flared Madam Lyndahl. "She's criminally careless of her health. Her selfish indulgence caused——"

"Stop!" thundered Gordon rising to his feet. "Are you mad? Do you also accuse my wife of race-suicide?"

"You mean child-murder," she corrected. "Yes, I do."

"If any one stands responsible," cried Gordon, "it is you!"

"Absurd!" she scoffed.



"What!" Gordon cried, "I a foundling?"

"It's true," declared Gordon. "You forced Doris to the retirement you later deplored. You afterward deprived the mother of her babe's care. Now you're responsible for her flight. She's never had a real home since our marriage. It has been your home and mine, never hers."

"Yes," Madam Lyndahl, angrily agreed. "It has been my home. It's mine in law, but not yours. Since you're searching for truth, have it. You were adopted by Mr. Lyndahl and myself when you were a babe. I never intended you should know. You've brought it on your own head. You've shown yourself the serpent warmed to life. You turn on your deliverer. So take the truth and digest it. You're a foundling."

"What!" Gordon cried, aghast. "I a foundling! What do you mean?"

"What I say," she coolly assured him. "But you're legally adopted. The orphan asylum looked to that."

"My parents?" he questioned sharply. "What do you know of them?"

"Nothing," his foster-mother told him. "You were among the few rescued from a disastrous train-wreck where fire destroyed the victims. Some one must have cast you from a window of the overturned car. You were sent to an orphanage. As we had no children we adopted you and raised you as our own. Now," she harshly commented, "I'm reaping my reward."

"At least," Gordon said wearily, "my parents were not paupers."

Abruptly he turned and ascended the stairs. This astounding information impressed him lightly, because his mind was filled with increasing terror regarding Doris's safety. Altogether his world was sadly inverted. Over and over his tired brain revolved the double problem: Where was Doris? Who were his parents? As he entered the familiar room and seated himself in his wife's low chair by her easel, he felt horribly alone. Memories pressed thick and fast upon him. Brilliant sunshine flooded the space, making mock of his misery. The place was filled with the dear familiar objects that belonged to his lost one. Beneath the dresser edge were the dainty slippers of tan Doris had worn that last evening. Again he heard her supplication: "Take me with you. We seem to grow apart. Gordon, I can't bear it!"

With a groan the man bent his head on his folded hands above his wife's desk. His empty arms ached for the warm touch of his wife's clinging form. At that moment he knew to its fullness the meaning of supreme love. He was the brute deprived of its mate, civilized man longing with agony for his beloved. Dry-eyed he rose to his feet.

"I'll find her!" he swore. "If she's living I'll find her, and if she's dead I'll possess her body. She's mine, mine before God!"

For a time he paced the room, then with sudden thought he began to search the papers in her desk. Perhaps she had left a line of writing that would give a clew. He found nothing. Then he remembered the loosened marble slab. He recalled Doris's trick of thrusting cards and notes beneath its protecting surface. He had remonstrated, thinking it childish. Now he eagerly examined the spot. A folded paper rewarded him. He opened it and read with blurred vision.

"Gordon, My Love: I'm going away because I'm a coward. Your mother says you'll despise me, will cast me out. I can't stay and see condemnation in your dear face. I can't stay to endure your just wrath. But I've been true, true to you in word and thought. I don't know where to go; but somehow there must be a quiet haven for babe and me. Your unhappy,

"DORIS."

"My God!" he groaned. "That helpless girl driven forth among strangers, driven forth by fear of my wrath!"

Immediately he descended to the livingroom. He would again take up the search. This time he'd examine train officers, advertise, and consult with Merrill. His eyes were bloodshot and his face gray with anguish. His foster-mother, having relieved her mind, was normally calm and entirely practical. As far as she was concerned the storm was over.

"I'm going back to the city," Gordon explained. "But before I go, let me say that I'm the one at fault in this affair. I allowed forces to ruin Doris's happiness that were under my control. Moreover, I want you to help me find my relatives. I'd be glad to know something of my origin."

In her customary matter-of-fact manner, Madam Lyndahl stepped to a cabinet, unlocked a drawer, and took from it a gold locket on a slender chain.

"That," said she, "was the only identifying trinket found on you. The orphanage nurse handed it to me when we removed you."

Wonderingly, Gordon snapped open the case and gazed at the sweet smiling face of a young woman.

"Why," cried he, "that was sufficient clew to establish my identity. Why wasn't it used?"

"Because," explained she, "it was their place to find you, not our business to locate your people. The orphanage doubtless advertised for a few days. As for us, you know we particularly wished your friends to forget your existence."

Like all arbitrary characters, Madam Lyndahl utterly ignored her burst of temper. Quite as usual she hastened about caring for Gordon's comfort. He must be forced to eat. After the warm meal Jud conveyed him back to the station and drove back by the postoffice in time for the evening mail. As that astute lady sorted and shifted letters and papers, Jud's straining eyes noted a package shoved aside for future consideration.

"That's all!" she snapped, pushing toward him the Lyndahl dailies. Jud's suspicious scrutiny wore on her nerves, particularly since Jake's lamentable failure to deliver the special mail.

"I reckoned that hoss-doctor book 'ud come this trip," Jud gravely asserted. "Right here's that one you hustled over by Jake. It's real interesting."

With that he pulled from his pocket the book, wrapper, and string that had recently held Doris Lyndahl's cash. Before Mrs. Webb's curious gaze he outspread pages illustrated with every species of decrepit horse. Spavins, ringbone, windgall, heaves, and countless other ailments were plainly set out in view.

"Oh!" said the astonished postmistress, recognizing the package as the one dispatched by Jake, "I didn't know it was yourn."

"Well, it is," Jud assured her. "And if you'll be so accommodating as to take a squint over there by that pork barrel, you'll find the mate to it. I ain't expecting to put you to no trouble sendin' it over, so jest fork it out."

Mrs. Webb muttered something about not noticing, and handed the diverted package over. Instantly Jud untied the cords and revealed another veterinary work, likewise filled with cuts of ailing cattle and horses. Mrs. Webb eyed the book with an expression of chagrin. Her idea of Jud's correspondence had been vastly different.

"That's the last of these here," Jud informed her. "Now I'm going to study up combustibles. Bimeby they'll be mailing samples o' dynamite an' such like; and if you should take a notion of sendin' 'em by Jake, caution him not to stub his toe."

CHAPTER V.

THE night of Doris's flight she slipped from the house while the servants were occupied with their evening meal. Therefore no one saw the slender figure, clad in a walking suit of rather conspicuous plaid. She carried a small hand satchel, and rapidly walked along the home road until it branched into the stage highway. A mile farther back she stopped at the cabin of Amos Bush. A generous fee insured her a swift conveyance to the station and discouraged inquisitiveness. Bush drove his rawboned team at a pace never before equaled, and pocketed a sum greater than any he had handled since his pioneer residence.

At the station she purchased a Chicago ticket, but used it only to a point near the border of Indiana. Here she changed cars east-bound. At a large city she mingled with a throng of passengers, stopped for lunch at a large hotel, and emerged from her room at the last moment entirely clad in a suit of navy blue. This change was accomplished by wearing parts of the two costumes and adding what was needed from the handbag. An entirely different person purchased a ticket for Pittsburgh. If any chose to search for a woman in plaid, she had disappeared. At Pittsburgh she diverged toward south Pennsylvania. At a country station she took rooms at an hotel with a trunk full of wearing apparel she had taken care to purchase at a former point. Here she was informed, when she questioned, that she might secure board with a Quaker family who occasionally took summer guests.

Throughout the long journey one thought sang an endless refrain. Unceasingly rang the words: "He'll send you forth like Hagar!" They played themselves over and over to the sound of traffic and the wheels of the stage that conveyed her to the journey's end. Even the banked sunset of the western sky seemed crimsoned with anger. Then they drew up before the frame building overlooking a lake, where a sweet-faced matron dressed in sober gray, but wearing a white apron and crossed neck cloth, met her at the door.

"I would like room and board for an indefinite period," Doris explained. "I have had trouble. I wish to be quiet."

Abbie Wharton noted the intense sadness of Doris's pale countenance, her gown which now was black, the wedding ring on the ungloved hand, and the evident refinement of the applicant for board.

"Thee may come if thee wishes," she responded heartily. "If thy wants are simple, I've no doubt we'll manage fine. Thee seems worn with the travel, poor

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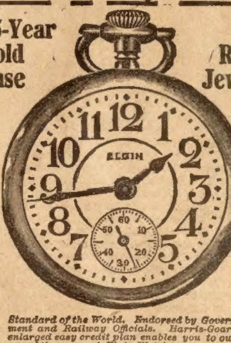

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child." Thee'll be shown thy room, then have tea."

"Nathan," she called to an invisible personage, "thee better have John help thee take up the lady's trunk."

Presently Doris was installed in a neat upper room. At the supper table she was seated between Abbie Wharton and Ruth, the slim, shy daughter. Nathan, the grave-eyed husband sat opposite and served, while John, the stalwart son, finished the family circle. Before many days the guest who arrived with the earliest robins harmoniously fitted into the simple home life of these kindly people. Ruth freely gave to their beautiful, sad-eyed visitor the adoration young girls often feel toward older women. Abbie mothered her most tenderly but quietly, and, without remark, she watched the wistful face, the hunger-filled eyes. Above all she wondered that the young woman should leave home—even an unhappy home—at such a time. Finally, one day, she broached the delicate subject, as she and Doris worked, after Ruth's departure for school, on dainty garments.

"Doris," she said, in soft tones of compassion, "thee has told little of thy past. We know nothing of thy home and friends. But I believe thee has given thy right name, that thee's good and true. This is proved by thy stay here in our home with Ruth. But hadn't thee better tell me something of thy people. Only God knows, child, whether thee will live through the coming ordeal. Then it would be best for us to know of thy relatives. Surely there is some one who loves thee and would wish to learn of thy fate."

"I must not trouble them!" cried Doris. "I'll go to—some hospital—when——"

"No," Abbie firmly declared. "Thee must stay with me. Does thee think we'd let thee go to strangers? No, no; thee shall be as my own daughter."

"You're the kindest friend I've ever had!" cried Doris. "You deserve my fullest confidence. I'm not, as you think, a widow. My husband is living, but he——"

Weeping, Doris told the sympathetic Abbie her little tragedy from start to finish. Not a page or word was missing. At the close Abbie Wharton knew more of the young wife's inner life, of her thoughts and emotions, than any one living.

"Poor lamb, poor simple child!" she said, at intervals during the recital. Then, when Doris had finished, she showed her deep knowledge of womankind, the wonderful wisdom that comes to good women. Her clear insight brushed aside the fancies that had clouded Doris's brain. In plain language she resolved the whole fabric of the girl's experience into its normal value. She placed each incident in its true light. While Doris sat by a window gazing at a vista of blossoming orchard, she showed the fugitive all matters with sane, commonplace understanding. She talked the fever from the girl's brain and the bitterness from her heart. No longer Madam Lyndahl loomed masterfully above her horizon. She was made to perceive wherein she had failed to assert her wifehood, her individuality. She saw herself as a weakling, a shirk, a coward.

"Abbie, I've been wickedly wrong," she admitted, with penitence. "I've avoided issues. Instead of facing consequences, I've fled like a criminal. Good friend, if you had been by, I'd have braved the storm. I'd have endured their anger, because I'm innocent of wrong."

"Thee has a long life before thee, my dear," Abbie said, smiling at her earnestness. "If the Lord wills, thee can start right and live true, winning friends by love and turning away hate."

"Tomorrow morning," promised Doris, "tomorrow I'll write."

But before dawn there was a confusion of lights and white-aproned women passing to and fro. The farm team had been aroused, while Nathan hurried into the night for a physician and Mary Winslow. The atmosphere of the Wharton home was surcharged with mild excitement. Then Mary Winslow, pleasant of countenance, came to heat a drink at the shining kitchen range, and made a cheery announcement.

"Doris is sleeping, poor lamb, and the little one's at her side. It's a daughter, a fine healthy daughter, and a perfect beauty."

It was Abbie who, next morning, assumed the responsibility of writing to the address Doris had mentioned. The handwriting was old-fashioned and cramped, but the words came from a kindly heart. In her quaint language she told of Doris and the child. With loving terms she stipulated that only gentleness be meted out to the delicate fugitive. Then she signed it, sealed it, and, with a prayer, gave it to the early post that started it on its journey. The date of the postmark was something over three months from the evening of Doris's flitting.

As time passed, Doris gained strength and a new loveliness—the brooding beauty of mother-love. Hour after hour she gazed, enraptured, at the flower-like face of her babe.

"My precious, my own darling!" she whispered and crooned. Abbie was appealed to many times each day for admiration and sympathy.

"Do see her stare with her big, dark eyes! Isn't she a beauty? Did you ever see a child with such long silky hair? Abbie, what will her father say when he sees his big girl? And it's been ten days since you wrote! What's keeping him away? Hadn't we better telegraph?"

"There, there, thee mustn't fret!" expostulated Abbie. "Letters are sometimes delayed. Put thy whole mind to getting well. Thy husband will write or come."

Thus assured, Doris resumed her rapturous study of the cherubic face, and indulged in happy anticipations for the future.

In far Chicago Gordon had set in motion the machinery of a detective bureau, together with personal advertisements. In the leading dailies appeared two intimate appeals. One was headed with the name of Doris and begged her to return. The other was accompanied with a facsimile of the portrait in the locket which Madam Lyndahl handed to her foster-son. With the cut was a brief account of its owner, and his desire to communicate with relatives. But neither sleuths nor advertising at first succeeded. The fugitive wife was easily traced to the point where she exchanged her plaid suit for one less noticeable. There she disappeared utterly. Her childish fright had given to her the wisdom of an expert. She hid her trail with a skill that was appalling.

While Gordon forced himself calmly to await results, he had abundant time to devote to self-analysis. He realized that, despite his foster-mother's undoubted love, she had never experienced the softening influence of a parent's affection. Unconsciously he had repressed the warmth of his nature until emotion had died. His adopted parents had given him a home and an education, but, to Madam Lyndahl he had always been the son of another woman. Her unemotional, undemonstrative temperament had not been calculated to develop the expression of love in another. But what the foster-son could not conceive during his lonely meditations was the pitiful truth concerning this woman. That this truth was deeply buried in her heart did not lessen the tragedy. Only one of her kind could understand—the one who has craved children, craved and been denied.

The bitter disappointment ate into her blood like iron. She grew harsh and intolerant. Her adopted son but allayed this heart hunger. Year by year her character attained imperial, masterful hardness. She became dictatorial. When Doris's child came she resolved to usurp its oversight, to sequester it from interference. She, the defrauded, was to possess what her heart craved. Thus fate wrought the fabric of opposing wills.

Gordon's advertisements had occupied a conspicuous place for over ten despairing, dragging weeks, when he received a letter with the business heading of Greigsby and Powell, New York attorneys. The typed contents notified him that they possessed a duplicate of the photograph which appeared with his request for information. They stated that the original was Mrs. Helen Armitage. He was notified to collect evidence showing that he owned the picture, and then come to them for further information.

Immediately Gordon secured copies of the orphanage entries and the adoption papers made out to the Lyndahls. To these he added a letter from his foster-mother. Then, leaving directions with both Madam Lyndahl and Merrill to wire him if word came from Doris, he set out for New York. He arrived at the Greigsby and Powell law office at midday. Greigsby, an urbane, brown-haired man of fifty, greeted him with deference.

"After all," said he, "it is with my father you will deal. I succeeded him in business, but he's the one who will clear up the mystery of the locket-photograph."

Consequently the two men entered Greigsby's powerful motor and were flashed along many streets until they stopped at a graystone residence which the lawyer entered with his client. In the quiet library was the one they sought. A gray-haired man placed his open book face down on the table at his elbow, and rose stiffly to greet his son and guest.

"Father," Greigsby said crisply, "I've brought this gentleman to you for identification. Do you know him?"

The old lawyer studied Gordon's face.

"No," said he, after a time, "I don't know him. But twenty-five years ago I knew his double. He is the exact image of Robert Armitage."

"Exactly," agreed Greigsby junior, with satisfaction. "He's then the image of his father. This is Robert Armitage's son."

"Impossible!" cried the old man. "Robert's infant son perished with his mother in a hotel fire."

"Instead," explained the younger man, "Helen Armitage started for home with nurse and babe. The letter written from the Colorado sanatorium stated that the following day she would start by train for New York. That night the hotel burned, guests were missing, but Mrs. Armitage had already started on her journey. Near Chicago she encountered a worse misfortune, if possible, than the one she escaped. She and the nurse were victims of a train wreck. How the babe was saved is a mystery. That he was rescued entirely unhurt is proved by these papers."

Greigsby junior placed the sheets referred to before his father.

"Your proof is not so much in these papers as engraved on your face," at last declared the old lawyer. "I'm convinced a strange fate has brought to me the son of my client. Your father never recovered from the terrible shock of your mother's untimely death and his uncertainty of what to believe. Believing her dead, he persisted in hoping that she might have escaped. When he died he left in my care his fortune to be held in trust for wife or son, if either survived. It is now considerably increased by accumulation of interest. I shall be glad to be relieved of its responsibility."

Gordon talked long with the man who had intimately known his parents, then departed for his hotel. There, awaiting him, was a telegram. He tore it open and read:

"Go to Doris and child at Fernville, Pennsylvania. MERRILL."

At the Wharton home, Doris, for the first time, was permitted to leave her room. The appearance of mother and babe in the large, cheerful sittingroom was an event. Ruth had filled the vases with early roses, and Mary Winslow, the Quaker nurse, was present to see that all was right. The young mother, in a soft, lace-trimmed lounging robe of creamy tint, with the babe on her lap, might have been the model of an ideal madonna. But the velvety brown eyes were filled with longing. Hour by hour they wistfully gazed down the highway which should bring strangers from the train. Abbie Wharton noted the anxious face with its yearning eyes.

"Thee must have patience, my dear," she said.

"Perhaps we'd better write again," insisted Doris. "He may find it hard to forgive. He may not understand."

"Then he'll be uncommon stupid," laughed Abbie.

But as she spoke Doris spied a carriage speeding along the highway.

"It's Martin Howe's livery team from Fernville station," declared Ruth.

"It's Gordon!" cried Doris, and, in defiance of warnings, sped to the door. Then, standing framed in the vine-wreathed doorway with babe in arms, she waited. With a bound Gordon left the carriage, entered the gate, and was at her side.

"My darling, my wife, my Doris!" he exclaimed, and folded both wife and child in his arms.

With face flushed from her husband's caresses, Doris turned and presented him to her new friends. Ruth looked at the handsome stranger with admiration. Abbie and Mary made him welcome. Then they disappeared and left husband and wife alone.

"See, Gordon, her hair waves like yours. And notice her quaint expression."

This was the tenor of the conversation for a breathless moment. There was no hesitancy, no fear. Everything was forgotten save the bliss of being

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reunited. Then Gordon told the wonderful story of his adoption and the later developments.

"You an adopted son! Your father's name Armitage!" ejaculated Doris. "Then what is mine?"

"I was legally adopted," explained Gordon. "We shall keep the name Lyndahl. I'm too well accustomed to it to change for a new title."

"But the fortune," cried Doris. Do we decline that?"

"Indeed not," said its owner. "We shall spend it right royally, as my parents would have wished."

The two lingered several days longer in the hospitable Quaker home. When they finally departed, Nathan held in his toil-hardened hand the canceled mortgage he had long attempted to pay. Abbie fingered a check so generous of figure that had she guessed the amount it would have been declined.

* * * * * *

In Madam Lyndahl's kitchen incense arose from much baking of pastry and roasting of meats.

"A pusson 'ud think Missis 'spected an army," grumbled Martha. "Such a baking o' bread an' rolls an' cookies an' crullers an' pies an' stuff I nebber did see."

"Anyway," commented Lucy, "there's the little Agatha named after Mis' Lyndahl a-coming; an' I s'pose she forgets that it ain't big enough to eat pie an' doughnuts. Queer now, wasn't it," she questioned, "that Mis' Doris should name her little girl after its grandma? I s'posed all the time that she went away mad at her mother-in-law. But land sakes, these here rich folks do everything different from us mossbacks."

"Yo' hussle an' set that table," advised the cook, "or the folks'll git here fore you're half done."

Martha was right in her conjecture. The sound of wheels spurred Lucy's lagging feet. Presently the hall door was flung wide, and there resounded voices in merry greeting and the tramp of feet. Then Lucy's wide-open eyes saw the pretty mother enter the big sitting-room with an arm about Madam Lyndahl's shoulders, while the latter held a bundle of white. And then she saw both mother and grandmother busied at the swansdown wrappings. She saw Gordon, broad-shouldered and handsome, enter with a stranger whom he introduced to his mother as "Mr. Joseph Elliot, the architect." Then the two gentlemen became absorbed in conversation regarding sites, exposures, foundations, and building material. In the kitchen Jud, who had disposed of his team, was dispensing information.

"That feller what rid on the front seat with me is goin' to build Mr. Lyndahl a regular mansion right near here on the lake," said he; "but to my mind he don't look no more like putting up a house 'en I do like playing a pianner."

"He don't build no more 'en you fiddle," declared Lucy. "I heard 'em say there's a corntractor an' men a-coming next week. He just makes picters of the house an' the corntractor builds it."

Lucy's observation was overtaxed during the following weeks. To the builders were added landscape gardeners. The grounds beyond the creek became a vast park with rustic bridges. Fountains sprayed a newly sodded lawn. Back of this space a white mansion contrasted with the emerald turf and the deep blue of the hill-circled lake.

This lake, as years multiplied, became known as the country residence of the Honorable Gordon Lyndahl, Member of Congress, and one-time State Representative. Occasionally Lyndahl's wife, the celebrated artist, accompanies him during his enforced stay at the capital. But after the close of political sessions the Lyndahl home becomes gay with the assembling of guests. Each autumn Dick Merrill and his distinguished uncle, the publisher, arrive in time for the hunting season. The latter is solely devoted to sport, but the nephew prefers boating. This is possibly due to the presence on such occasions of a slim, demurely pretty girl named Ruth Wharton.

One morning in vivid October, when the air was mellowed to summer warmth, little Agatha was flitting about the lawn and veranda under the watchful eye of Madam Lyndahl, who was peacefully knitting in the shade of clambering ivy.

(Continued on page twenty-five.)

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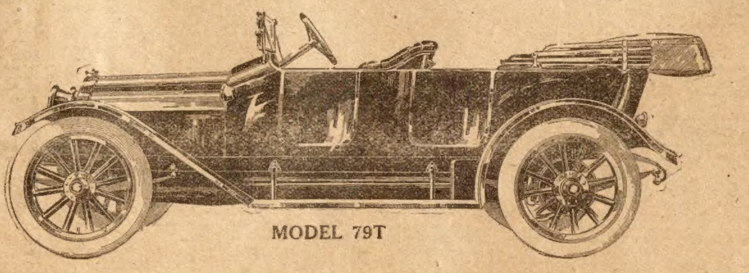

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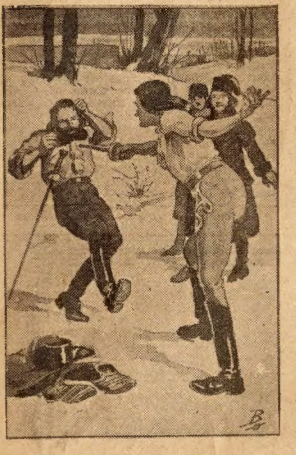
Or, The Passion of an Empress By Hugh Hamilton



The sword was buried in his bosom.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE "SNOW LADY."

DEEP in the heart of White Siberia stood a collection of huts which was known as Ural. Around them lay the cold white of that hopeless land, the mountains rising in a circle about the spot and the winds singing their weird song from frozen dawn to icy night.

Now and then a figure flitted among the huts, and the pallid features, seen only by the stars, wore the bitter cast of the exile. Here and there a faint light gleamed beyond the frost-encrusted windows, and from the mountains came the long lone howl of the wolfish pack that constantly haunted them. And this was Catherine's doom for those whom she feared and hated.

It was a long road from St. Petersburg to Ural. There was no turning in that endless lane for the doomed. The dwellers in the palaces saw in the ghastly way the flitting of hope and the enthronement of despair. They could dream on their poor pallets of the soft couches and the silken draperies of other times. Over their black crusts they could conjure feasts forever fled, and feel in their souls the irony of their situation. Hope never crossed the white frontier. Cheeks grew pale and hearts sank to immeasurable depths in bosoms once the abodes of joy.

There was dancing in the Winter Palace, there were flashing jewels and the lights fell over "fair women and brave men." The great Empress sat enthroned, with no fear of future vengeance, and the poor mujiks, hugging their kopecks in abject squalor, praised her for her "mercy" and prayed for her nightly.

In one of the little huts in Ural sat a young woman in the light of a tallow dip. She was quite alone. The wind howled a miserere about the place, and the snow demon whitened the panes with his freezing flakes.

They called her the Snow Lady, those who shared with her the lonely exile of the North. They blessed her for the soft hands she had pressed to fevered brows and for the hymns she sang for the dying. They would have shed the last drop of their blood for her.

For months Xenia Carloff had lived in this almost forgotten end of the world. Fate had robbed her of some of her freshness, but it had spared her beauty.

At times she recalled the long journey to the land of desolation. She lived over the dangers of that wild ride across the white steppes, the chase by the wolves, the fight for life in the mountain passes, the pangs of cold and hunger, the pitiless snow and the shrieking winds.

What was happening in St. Petersburg? Where was Paul? Had he at last succumbed to the blandishments of the great Catherine? Had she at last caught him in the net of passion, and had he supplanted the haughty Orloff in her affections?

From the Palace of Doom no message had ever come. If one had been sent it had been intercepted by the hand of vengeance. At least it had never reached her.

All at once a faint knock came to the door of her house. She arose and opened it, to feel the cutting snow in her face and to see outlined against a field of stars a face which startled her.

Would she come to Number 878? He was dying and wanted her ministrations ere he slipped the leash of exile and passed into that land where fetters are unknown.

"I will come at once," responded Xenia. "You need not wait for me, Doroff," and she closed the door and made ready for a walk through the bleak night.

It was many a step to the spot to which she had been summoned. It was a brave breasting of snow and tempest, but she bent her head to both and hastened on. At the door of a hut not unlike her own, which bore the number 878, she paused and seemed to recover her breath. She did not knock, but pushed the door open and entered a dimly-lighted room.

A man reclining on a cot of straw raised his head, and his eyes glittered at sight of her. Xenia picked up the tallow light from the table and approached the bed.

"You've come, Countess?" murmured the man. "It was a trick to see you," and a wan smile of triumph banished the pallor on the face before her.

"Ivan!" exclaimed Xenia.

"Your fellow exile," said the man. "I trust we shall not be here long."

"What say you, Ivan Panine?" cried the Countess. "Has not Catherine barred every door of hope?"

"But what are bolts and bars when the soul would soar?" was the exclamation that greeted her words. "I have news from Paul."

Xenia clasped her hands upon her breast as if to stifle the cry that struggled there. News from Paul? It could not be. How could tidings from him pass the boundaries of eternal doom? Who would dare carry a message from him to Ural? And why to Ivan Panine and not to her?

"Don't doubt his love," Ivan went on, as if interpreting her very thoughts. "It would be dangerous to send it to you direct. The last caravan of exiles brought it."

"Then let me have it," she cried, clutching his sleeve. "Don't keep me in torture. News from Paul? Thank Heaven! At last!"

Panine fumbled in the straw beneath his body. Ages seemed to pass before his hand reappeared. The little thing he clutched was snatched away by the breathless woman, and she eagerly pressed it to her lips.

"My God!" she cried, ere her eyes had devoured the first six lines.

"It pains you," said Ivan.

"Paul is Colonel of the Preojenski Guards."

"Well?"

"He has accepted the Order of the Iron Eagle."

"Good for Paul!" cried Panine.

Xenia crushed the letter in her hand.

"Why don't you read to the end?" said the man. "A letter is no letter till it has been read through."

The silence that succeeded was almost palpable. Xenia's eyes were devouring the lines beneath them. When she had finished she lifted the letter to her lips until Ivan wondered if she were not losing her senses. Then she suddenly hid the missive in her bosom and rose to her feet.

"I don't ask to know what Paul says," said the man, still watching her with hungry eyes.

"He has fought and wounded Colonel Poniatowski. He has wiped out the insult in the coward's blood!" exclaimed Xenia, her face glowing in the light. "Never again will that wretch call him the poltroon of the Guards. Paul is attached to the Winter Palace——"

"So near the Empress?" broke in Ivan.

"He sees her daily," Xenia went on, as if she had not been interrupted. "He has made an enemy of Count Orloff."

"Which means that the Count will soon be asked to 'travel' and Paul will take his place."

"Never!" cried the Countess. "See! Here he kissed the letter," and wrenching it from its hiding-place, she forced it into his face. "The blandishments of the great Empress fall from Paul like melting snow from a mountain peak."

"Or as water from a duck's back, as we used to say in old St. Petersburg," grinned Panine.

"Yes, yes," laughed Xenia. "Now, what have you to say, Ivan, dear?"

"Much," was the reply. "But will you go to the door and see if the coast is clear?"

The Countess crossed the room and looked out.

"I see nothing but the snow and the

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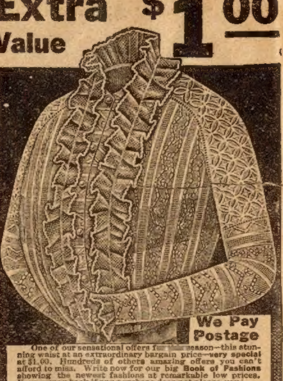

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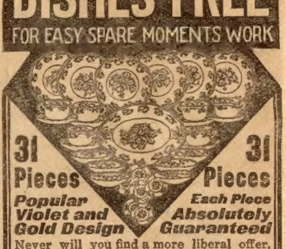

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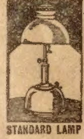

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[illegible]," she said, reseating herself at the [illegible].

"And they have no ears, thank Heaven!" cried the exile.

Then he took Xenia's hand and pulled her down toward him.

"We are going to outwit the great Empress," said he almost in whispered tones.

"Don't torture me, Ivan Panine!"

"Not for the world, my Snow Lady," smiled Ivan. "Yes, we are going away."

"When?"

"Tomorrow night."

"Impossible! Death is the only shape that eludes Catherine's jailers."

"But love and strength have triumphed over death even in Siberia."

"I dare not think it."

"Do you know who came this day?"

"From St. Petersburg?"

"Yes, my lady."

"No."

"Ursus is here."

The beautiful Countess fell back with a start.

"What, Ursus the Cossack, the faithful menial of the all-powerful Catherine?"

"Yes. Paul sent him."

"Don't lie to me, Ivan."

"May Heaven shut its golden gates upon me if I lie!" cried the man, vehemently. "It was a deep game. Ursus mutinied. He held the great Potemkin against the wall and choked him. It was the best way to get to Siberia. It was Paul's plan and Ursus's carrying out. Now, my dear lady, don't you feel the old blood coursing through your veins?"

Xenia was silent for a minute. Then from the depths of her soul she exclaimed:

"Paul! Ursus! Freedom! Thank God!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FLIGHT.

IT WAS not the next night nor the next that a sledge, drawn by two mettled black horses, dashed across the western confines of Ural. The night was clear, and the vast starry field glittered like a diamond mine.

Much had to be done before the fugitives could pass the boundaries guarded by Catherine's watchdogs. The man who held the reins was Ursus, and the occupants of the flying sledge, half hidden by furs, were Ivan Panine and the Countess **Xenia.**

Many versts away was the goal of their journey, the city of Astrakhan on the borders of the Caspian Sea. Between them and safety lay the white tundras, the long, low plains and the dreaded forests of birch in which lurked the Siberian wolf, the terror of every poor soul that sought to escape a living death in the mines.

Apparently no one had witnessed the departure of the sledge, but there were some who knew that the beloved Snow Lady was going to make a break for liberty, and those who knew were on their knees praying for her success. The gold brought to Ural by Ursus had accomplished much. The giant Cossack knew how to corrupt the right ones, and leaving his bright coins where they would do the most good, he had managed well for the attempt.

The Countess Xenia, huddled among the furs, felt her heart beat as it had not done for many a long white day. The mines were behind her. She was going back to Paul. She would once more feel his kiss upon her brow and hear from his own lips the words of undying love.

Catherine had not yet won the game. Though she had promoted Paul and pinned upon his breast the Order of the Iron Eagle, he was still true to his Countess, and all the wiles of the great Empress would prove unavailing.

"How fares my Countess?" asked Ivan, bending low and almost touching the cheek just visible beneath the stars.

"Like the bird that has just left her cage," was the reply, as a pair of bright eyes were lifted to his face.

"It will be a long journey."

"But the horses are strong and the sledge staunch," smiled Xenia.

"And love is the goal," laughed Ivan.

"Love! love!" murmured Xenia. "We will prove that the hands of Catherine cannot always hold."

On, on went the sledge, skipping over the snow and sending it in glittering particles on either side. There was a grim smile on the bearded face of the Cossack. He bent to his work with a will, and now and then his lips hummed a ballad of his native land. Xenia laughed, prayed, and sang by turns. Only when they entered one of the gloomy, white forests did she lapse into silence.

All at once Ursus turned his head. A strange sound had saluted his ears. It proceeded from the depths of the ghostly tarn, a long, low sound that he had heard before. Nestling in her furry covering, Xenia heard it not. Ivan leaned forward and tapped Ursus lightly on the shoulder. Their eyes met and the Cossack nodded.

"Can we reach the river ahead of them?" whispered Ivan, and at the same time he glanced at the figure by his side.

"We have good horses," said Ursus.

"And firearms!" replied the poet.

"Is our lady asleep?"

"I think so."

"Then for Heaven's sake do not wake her," and Ursus turned to his task and spoke to the horses which increased their gait.

As the noise was not repeated, Ivan took hope. The icy stars sank in their courses, and the sledge flew on.

Not far away wound the Ural River, white with its garbing of ice and snow, and deathlike in the stillness that hovered over it. Again that sound crept over the ghastly white. It grew in volume, and Ursus knew.

The horrid pack was abroad! The demons of the snow lands had left their mountain fastnesses and were out for human lives. With lolling tongues and pointed teeth they were racing for their night feast, for they had scented the fugitives and were now straining every nerve in the wild run.

"What was that?"

Xenia had cast off some of her coverings and was looking up into Panine's face.

"I heard it!" she went on, since he did not reply. "Keep nothing from me, Ivan. It is the pack."

He knew it was useless to deceive her.

"It is the pack," said he, in low tones. "But we have good horses, my lady——"

"And the river cannot be far away."

"It is quite near."

From not far behind them now came the barking of the wolves. The hideous hunters were gathering strength with every verst, and it seemed as though from every gulch and every tundra came the blasts of death.

Ursus was as silent as a secret. He looked at the horses and seemed to calculate their powers of endurance. Ivan turned and looked back. There was something dark on the snow, something that seemed to rise and fall like dark billows beneath a storm-swept sky. As he looked, the thing grew larger. Now it widened and now concentrated, until he seemed to be able to count the wolves, picking out the giant leader that leaped over the ground in advance of the terrible cohort. At length, with compressed lips, Ivan drew from beneath some furs a musket and a brace of pistols. Xenia put forth her hand.

"Give me one of them, Ivan," she said, in tones of command.

"But, my lady——"

"I have handled pistols before,'" she answered, smiling. "There are huts by the river, I'm told," and she took the weapon from the Russian's hands and deliberately cocked it.

"How far is the river?" Panine asked, bending slightly toward the immobile Ursus.

"Three versts, good Ivan."

"And the horses?"

"They have heard the pack."

Goaded by their long fast, the wolves bounded on and on. Yelping in their eagerness, they seemed to fly over the snow without touching it. Swift as the steeds were, the grisly terrors of the Siberian forests were not to be outdone.

"Here they are!" shouted Ivan, springing to his feet with every nerve at its utmost tension and the musket in his hands. Xenia dashed the furs aside and planted herself firmly in the reeling sledge.

Ursus was alert. His great figure was now erect, and he was lashing the plunging horses with all his might.

"Faster! faster, Ursus!" cried Ivan.

"I'll give the animals wings!" came from between clinched teeth.

In another moment it seemed as if the foremost wolves were biting the back of the sledge. Ivan fired at the leader, and the huge fellow sank into the snow, brained by the avenging lead. Xenia leaned forward and discharged her pistol at a leaping brute and sent him to join his comrade.

"Who taught you to shoot?" cried Panine, in tones of admiration.

"Paul!" was the reply. "Paul taught me to shoot and—to love."

The deaths of the two wolves only infuriated the others. They looked uncanny in the starlight as they sprang at the sledge, their bloody fangs ghastly in the extreme and their fiery eyes searching out their intended victims. They were now on both sides of the bounding vehicle. The giant of the demon pack leaped at the off-horse, and Ursus shot him dead with his pistol.

"The river!" cried the Cossack. "I see the river!"

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed the Countess.

At this moment Ivan discarded his musket and seized an ax. He had suddenly transformed himself into an Ajax of the North. Swinging the ax right and left in his powerful hands, he slew at each maddened stroke, but what did it avail?

The sledge was now in the heart of the band. The horses had been brought almost to a standstill, whilst the brutes were leaping at them, tearing their flesh and filling the air with the impact of battle.

"The hut! the hut!" shouted Ivan. "Ten feet more, my good Ursus, and we are safe."

The horses rose and fell. They exerted every nerve; the pack had closed in upon them, doubly maddened by the smell of warm blood.

A little hut without a light rose above the snow. Ivan gave one last sweep of his terrible weapon, and then caught up the shrinking form of Xenia.

"Clear the way for us, Ursus!" he called out, and as the heroic Cossack leaped into the gray mass and struck right and left with his ax, Ivan dashed through the red lane with Xenia in his arms.

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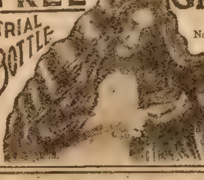

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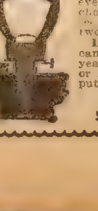

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He fell against the low-hung door, and it tumbled inward. Ursus was at his heels. The big Cossack slammed the portal shut and placed his back against it, and the next moment it seemed as if a thousand wolves were leaping against the stout planks.

CHAPTER XV.

THE INSULT.

IT WAS a gala night in St. Petersburg. The magnificent Winter Palace blazed with lights, and the valor and beauty of the Muscovite capital celebrated the anniversary of the great Empress's birth.

Catherine herself, fittingly robed for the occasion, stood on a handsome dais looking over the gorgeous assemblage, and now and then addressing in low tones the Princess Dragonoff. Officers in the richest uniforms were everywhere and, among the foremost was Count Gregory Orloff, towering above his fellows in stature and a marked man wherever he moved.

At one side of the immense room, and apart from the others, stood Paul Daroski, wearing on his bosom the beautiful Order of the Iron Eagle, which blazed with diamonds. The young Colonel, Xenia's lover, seemed to take no delight in his surroundings. His thoughts were elsewhere, amid the white wastes of Siberia, and she upon whom he had fixed them had grown dearer for her long and lonely exile.

At length the Empress's searching gaze singled out the young Colonel and settled there with passion. Catherine was no longer young, but she had lost but little of her imperial beauty. Her rich robes threw a glamour of brightness about her, and it was apparent that she was still young enough to love in her passionate way. Suddenly she turned and beckoned to a young prince who stood at the foot of the dais.

"Summon Colonel Daroski to me," said the Empress. "I would have converse with him."

Eager to obey the imperial mandate, the prince hastened away and roused Paul from his dreamy abstraction.

"The Empress summons," said he, and with a low bow withdrew.

Paul started and seemed to shiver. Concealing his disgust, he crossed the room and made his obeisance, which was graciously received. Catherine extended her jeweled hand, which Paul took and raised to his lips.

"I wish my Empress long life and continued happiness," said he, while his thoughts were still far away.

"The Empress thanks Colonel Daroski," replied Catherine, watching him closely. "You do not seem happy tonight."

"As happy as your servant can be," answered Paul. "This is a great night for all Russia, your majesty."

A smile came to the Empress's face.

"What favor can I grant you, Colonel?" she asked, lowering her voice slightly. "Have you nothing to ask at our hands tonight?"

There were words upon Paul's lips which he wanted to ask, but his heart shrank from it. So far as he knew, a beautiful woman was shivering among the snows of the far North, and her bed that night was little better than a pallet of straw.

But Xenia was thus situated at the commands of this haughty woman, and all because she had won his love. The merciless hand of the Semiramis of the North had descended upon her head, and many a cold, white, wolf-guarded verst separated them.

"You do not answer, my dear Colonel," continued Catherine, regarding him from the depths of her dark eyes. "Is it possible that you have no favor I can grant?"

At this juncture a heavy footstep fell upon Paul's ears, and half turning, he found himself in the presence of Gregory Orloff, upon whose countenance sat a look of rage. Catherine looked perturbed. All St. Petersburg believed that these two men were rivals for the smiles of the great Empress.

Orloff was intensely jealous. There was hot blood in his veins, and his eyes flashed as he stood before Catherine, swelling with madness as his pale and heavy lips twitched perceptibly.

"I beg your majesty's pardon," said the Count, "but the Princess Dragonoff has just been asking what has become of Colonel Daroski."

Paul flushed to the temples.

"Let the Princess continue to inquire," said he, returning Orloff's look with interest. "It is certain I have not been launching inquiries in her direction."

Paul's sarcastic tones drove away what little color remained in the Count's face.

"I did not intend to nettle Colonel Daroski," he answered haughtily. "I am but the bearer of news."

That this woman who had played spy and jaileress in the Palace of Doom had inquired for him drove Paul's blood hot through every vein. He shot an angry glance toward the place where he had seen her last.

"Am I not to be thanked for my message?" demanded Orloff.

Paul sent a rapid glance towards the Empress.

"I thank no one for such a message," said he. "I have nothing in common with the Princess Dragnoff."

"Not even a flirtation?"

"To flirt with her would be an unpardonable sin!"

A light laugh of derision parted Orloff's lips. He turned his reddened face to Catherine.

"Your majesty sees how a prince of the empire is treated by a common colonel," he flashed.

This was more than Paul could endure. He stepped back and drew his glove.

"A common colonel?" cried he. "Let Count Orloff know that the blood that flows through my veins is as rich as that which warms his own."

"I have nothing to retract."

"Then take the gauntlet of the 'common colonel'!" came hot and swift from Paul's ashen lips, and the glove, well thrown, landed squarely in Orloff's face.

The giant Count recoiled and laid his hand on his sword. The smile which had gathered at the Empress's mouth vanished like a sunbeam before a storm.

"You shall pay with your blood for this insult!" roared Orloff, his voice reaching every corner of the great room. "No man insults Gregory Orloff with impunity."

"Who gave the provocation?" replied Paul, with a glance at Catherine, whose love for the Count had long since grown cold.

"Gentlemen——" began the Empress in a half-hearted manner, and then she suddenly stopped.

"Count Orloff can have any satisfaction he desires," continued Paul, abating none of his suddenly roused anger.

"And you may be sure satisfaction will be demanded," was the retort, and Orloff turned on his heel and tramped away.

It was some moments before the Empress regained her composure. Her face was still white, and for an instant she followed the retreating figure of the giant. By this time Count Orloff had reached a group of his friends to whom he exhibited his feelings.

"This way, Prince," he said, addressing one of the little coterie. "A word with you in secret."

He was followed to a remote corner of the room by the person whom he had addressed.

"Will you fight for me, my dear Prince?" he asked, as he looked at his friend. "You are called the best swordsman in St. Petersburg."

"There is but one man whom I consider my equal, if I may make a confession."

"And that man is——"

"Colonel Daroski of the Guards."

"Pish!" cried Orloff. "That is the very man I would have you meet. He but now flung his glove into my face and——"

"The rascal!"

"Rascal yes, and coward, too! I cannot stoop to fight this fellow. I am above him in station. I am Count Orloff, and you know I cannot cross blades with one who is not ennobled."

"And you want me to take your place?"

"That is it, Prince."

"But he has not insulted me."

"Oh, waive that little objection," grinned Orloff. "I think you told me not long since of a secret thrust which you have invented—one that is not taught in the schools of swordsmanship."

"I have it perfect, but——"

"That will do. This fellow knows it not," and Orloff's voice suddenly fell to a whisper. "There are no secrets between us, Prince. The Empress has looked upon Paul Daroski and thinks him handsome. You know what that means."

The other bowed.

"It is he or I," continued the Count, flushing again. "If Paul Daroski is not put out of the way, I will soon be commanded to 'travel'."

"I see."

"The new thrust will do it. You have not forgotten it?"

"My last opponent remembers that I have lost none of my skill, but remember he has not insulted me."

"We'll find a way. When the banquet is called, seat yourself near him. A dash of wine over his uniform will do the work. He is as quick as powder. You will get his hand across your face and—well, your blade will do the rest."

"I won't forget, my dear Count. I will certainly do 'the rest' as you say," and the twain separated, Orloff's features assuming a triumphant expression, for he had doomed Xenia's lover to the sword that had never been known to fail.

CHAPTER XVI

THE IMPERIAL BLADE.

"IT WAS the neatest thing I ever saw. Prince Topotkin had his nerve with him, and the wine went straight to the target. The scheme worked admirably," and Count Orloff lay back in his chair and laughed till his big face was crimson.

In court circles every tongue was wagging over the only late incident worth talking about. At the brilliant banquet given by the great Empress whose birthday the whole empire was celebrating, Prince Topotkin, one of the young bloods

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of St. Petersburg, had spilled wine over Paul Daroski's uniform and in such a manner that no one could mistake the intent. And what could Paul do but resent the affront?

This he did in a way that startled and silenced the guests. In an instant his own glass, full of ruby vintage, flew across the board and struck Orloff's tool full in the face. There was no asking what would follow the exciting incident. But one thing could follow it—a duel.

Fast upon the scene came the challenge in the wildest words Topotkin could utter, and in the presence of the Empress he dared Paul to meet him on the "field of honor." That is why all St. Petersburg was ringing with the news, and why many shook their heads and said that Xenia's lover was doomed.

Catherine seemed to be the only person who had remained calm. She witnessed the whole affair, and her cheeks, reddening for a moment, resumed their natural color

Orloff was beside himself with joy. He had found a champion, and gloating over Topotkin's mastery of the sword, he felt that the days of his rival were numbered.

Paul, bidding Catherine good night, sought his own chambers and dropped into a chair. The plot was plain to him. The insult was a studied one. He had really no quarrel with Topotkin, in whom he saw but the tool of Orloff who would keep his place in the Empress's affections, believing that he (Paul) was striving to supplant him.

The young Colonel suddenly arose and began to pace the floor.

"Gods!" he cried, "if I could only know what is happening in Siberia. Will the plot fail? Will Ursus prove loyal? And if he does and carries out his game, will Xenia reach the frontier? It is a long journey to Astrakhan. There are the white forests, the rivers, the tundras, and—my God! the wolves!"

He seemed unnerved by the dreadful thought and the terrible suspense. A vision seemed to pass before him. He put his hands up to his eyes and shuddered. He heard the howling of the Siberian storm and the yelping of the hellish pack. He saw a sledge bounding over the snow, pursued by the gaunt terrors of the steppes. He saw the red-fanged brutes leaping at the horses, he heard the cries for help, he saw Xenia dragged from her warm furs by the midnight pack, and then [illegible] he fell inert and breathless into the chair.

Not until he had [illegible] this awful scene from his imagination did he come back to the present. He remembered the insult at the Winter Palace; he saw the flushed face of Orloff's tool, the red wine streaming once more over his bosom, the triumphant leer in Orloff's eyes, and then he sprang to his feet and seized his sword.

He had promised to meet his insulter, and he would. Not only this, when he had finished the tool he vowed that he would pay his respects to the master.

"Kill the slave first," rang through his brain, "and then spit the heart of Orloff."

But what if he should fail? He knew that Topotkin was accounted the best swordsman in the empire, a man who had twenty duels to his credit, and all victories. Moreover, he was a man who would take undue advantage of his opponent; he had secret thrusts and cunning parries, and it was hinted that he wore a coat of mail.

What if he did? Paul was battling not only for his own honor, but for the future happiness of the most beautiful woman in the world. He had not been enmeshed by the great Empress, although he wore the decorations she had bestowed upon him for a certain purpose. It was Catherine who had sent Xenia to the eternal snows; it was her hand that had promulgated the infamous ukase which sent the Countess Carloff into exile, with the hope that the man she loved would forget her—just as though he could!

It takes more than an empress to uproot the tree of love. Paul vowed anew that he would never turn from the object of his affections, no matter what power Catherine possessed, and if his plot failed, never again would he set his heart upon any woman.

Meantime, while he was meditating in the solitude of his apartments, a strange scene was taking place in the Empress's secret boudoir. Catherine was testing half a dozen swords that lay on a table. She was strong and wiry. Blade after blade she picked up and made the points kiss the polished hilts. They were all good Damascene swords, beautiful in workmanship and without a flaw.

Ever and anon she glanced toward the door, as though she expected some one. At last a footfall came to the portal and Catherine smiled. An old man entered and made his obeisance.

He was the best sword-maker in her realm. He had been sent for and had come.

"Which is the best?" asked Catherine as the old man approached the table. "Make no mistake, good Sergius."

Sword after sword was carefully examined by the armorer and laid aside. His eyes glittered like twin diamonds.

"You are long in choosing," said the Empress.

"Choice is difficult among such noble blades," was the reply.

The Empress folded her arms and waited.

"I select this one," said the old man, at last. "It has all the qualities of a royal blade," and he handed a sword-hilt first to the waiting woman.

"I thank you, Sergius, but if the blade fails, St. Petersburg will lose a sword-maker and Siberia will gain an exile!"

"I stake my life on my judgment," old Sergius replied, and Catherine tossed him a handful of gold rubles.

When the armorer was gone, the Empress took the selected blade and bent it. It flew back with a musical click that seemed to delight her. Calling a servant into her presence, she commanded him to wrap the blade in velvet and carry it at once to Colonel Paul Daroski. The menial stared a moment, and then set about carrying out the orders of his royal mistress.

A look of surprise came into Paul's eyes when the man entered his presence.

"From the great Empress," said the servant, laying the wrapped weapon upon his table.

When he was alone, Paul took the sword from its coverings and inspected it. It was better than his own. More than ever at that moment he saw through the designs of Catherine. She would preserve him from Topotkin's fury, and all for a selfish purpose.

"I'll try the imperial blade," he said aloud. "If it fails me, may the result recoil upon the head of the Empress!" and putting the weapon away, he sought his couch.

"You must not forget the secret thrust," said Orloff, the following day to Prince Topotkin.

"May God forget me if I do!" was the reply. "But what is this strange tale I hear?"

"What have you heard?"

"Sergius, the royal sword-maker, went to the Winter Palace last night."

"To the palace!" exclaimed Orloff.

"Even so, Count."

"I knew nothing of such a visit."

"He was seen to [illegible] up the steps. It was past midnight."

A singular look came into Orloff's eyes.

"Forget it," said he after a moment's silence. "You meet Daroski tonight."

"Yes, in the Summer Garden by the Neva."

"Drink no wine till then. You must have all your wits about you. And the secret thrust; don't forget that, I say."

"But if I should fail——"

"Pish! You are not going to fail. No one can successfully meet the Topotkin thrust. He has no blade like yours. You have nerves of steel and the eye of an eagle. I shall wait for you in my palace," and Orloff turned away.

The clocks of the imperial capital were chiming the midnight hour when a little party of cloaked men entered the Summer Garden. The wind that swept up the frozen river blew icily into their half-concealed faces and chilled them to the bone. Paul and a single second awaited them.

Prince Topotkin cast aside his cloak and looked at his handsome young antagonist. As lithe as an Indian, with no superfluous clothing about him, stood the Colonel of the Guards, his face pale but thoughtful and his gaze riveted upon his enemy.

"I would rather he were Orloff," thought Paul. "But wait. That villain's time may yet come."

There were few preliminaries. The stars looked down upon the white field and seemed to halt in their courses. It was a well-matched struggle. Now Paul had Topotkin at his mercy, and again he felt Topotkin's point at his breast. The spectators held their breath.

The time came for the secret thrust. The heated Prince gave it with all his might, but alas! for skill, for as deftly as he gave, his blade was turned aside and the steel of Paul—the Empress's sword—was buried in his bosom.

With a cry Paul cast the weapon into the snow. The hated hilt seemed to blister his hand, and when Count Orloff staggered from the man who was carried into his presence swathed in blood, Paul was pacing his room thinking only of Xenia and Siberia.

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* * *

Misunderstood.

It was a crowded car. Among those who could not find seats was a young lady. Close to where she stood an old man was sitting. He struggled as if to arise. The young woman cast a glance of scorn at one or two men hiding behind newspapers.

"Please don't get up," she said to the old man. "I beg you won't." The conductor rang the bell and the car went on. The old man's features worked convulsively and he mopped his face with his handkerchief. At the next stopping-place he again tried to arise and again the young woman tried to stop him.

"I would much rather stand," she said, continuing to block his way.

"I don't care whether you would or not," said the old man, crimson with fury. "I want to get out. You've made me come half a mile too far already. Here, you, stop the car."

But it was too late, the bell had already rung and he had to wait until the next stopping place was reached.

* * *

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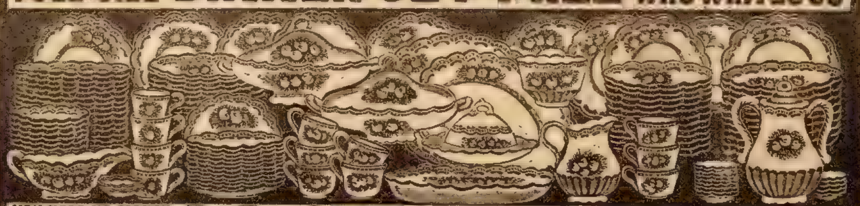

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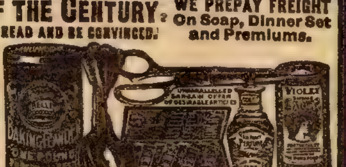

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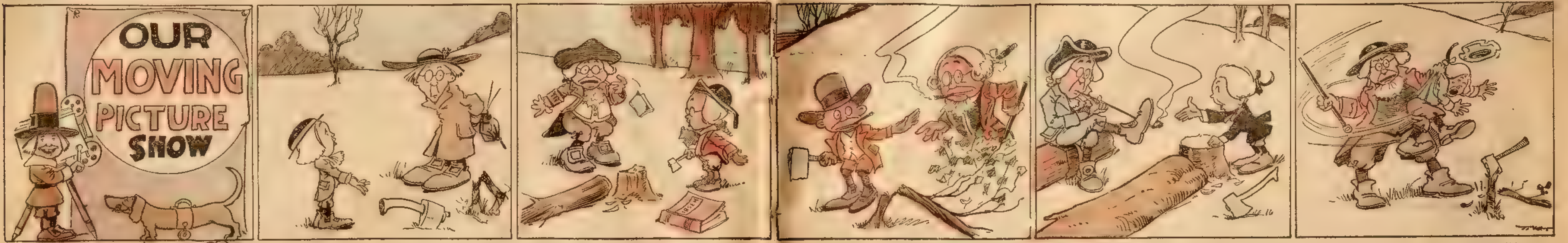
IF GEORGE HAD BEEN FROM—

A Suspicious Wife.

"That's what I call a Judas kiss."
"What's that?"
"One from my wife, to see if I have been drinking."

Paradoxical.

"He's no good, but how are we going to get rid of him?"
"Why, make it too hot for him."
"All right; we'll freeze him out."



From Philadelphia—"Prithee, good father, the spirit did move me to lay down yonder tree. Thee knows **I cannot lie. I did it with yonder implement."**

From Boston—"I humbly awsk your pardon, my reverend father, I acknowledge frankly that I am the cause of the recumbent position of this sapling. You are perfectly aware that it is impossible for me to prevaricate. I accomplished it with my diminutive hatchet."

From New York—"Soit'ny I done it wid de ax. Wot's de use in gittin' hot under de collar about it? Go chase yourself!"

From Washington (George)—"I propose an amendment to the motion and rise to a point of explanation. The gentleman has a right to know that I did the chopping with my little hatchet."

From Chicago—"Help! Police! Oh, Pop, I'll never cut down another tree as long as I live! Ouch! I won't be able to sit down for a week!"

Very Dense Ignorance.

Mrs. Wayback—"I ain't goin' to stick in the country any longer. If we sell out the farm now, we'll have enough to live on, and then we can move to the city and keep up with the times. I've lived in ignorance an' darkness just as long as I'm goin' to."

Farmer Wayback—"Good lands! What's got into yeh?"

"I've got ashamed of myself, that's what. One can't learn anything off here in the wilderness. When we was down to Chicago, a couple of months ago, I heard some one point out a fine-lookin' man on Wabash avenue, and tell his wife that man was one of the big guns of the literary world, and that he writ fer the magazines."

"What of it?"

"What of it? Why, here you and I has been grovelin' along fer years and years, a-thinkin' that a magazine gun was something to shoot with."

■

Not a Happy Lot.

Editor (Moon City Boomer)—"There's another fellow waiting out there with a gun. Ah, me! An editor's lot is not a happy one. If that man should kill me, he would lose nothing, as there are plenty of other fools willing to take my place here, and keep him supplied with the news of the day at five cents a copy."

Friend—"You are a good shot, and can pick him off with perfect safety right from this window."

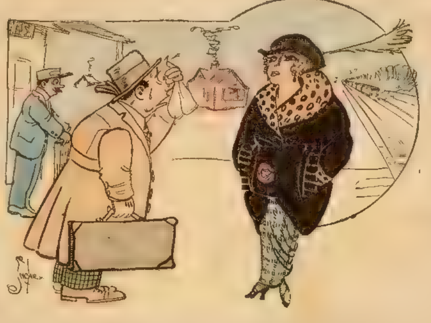
Editor—"Huh! If you were running this paper, you'd soon be bankrupt. If I should kill him, I'd lose a subscriber."

❧

Eccentricities of Blue Blood.

Mrs. Highupp—"Do you believe it is true that the Emperor William is having the milk from his farm at Potsdam retailed in Berlin from wagons with his name painted on them?"

Mrs. Wayupp—"I shouldn't wonder. It's nothing. Why, even my grandfather did the same thing."



He—"You see, my dear, we've missed the train! If you hadn't taken so long to dress we could have caught it!"

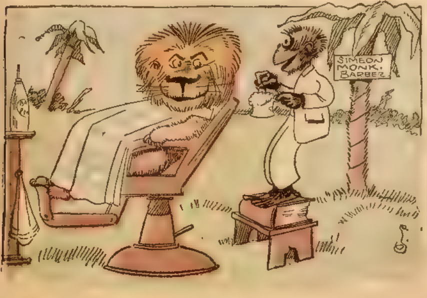
She—"And if you hadn't hurried so we shouldn't be here yet, and wouldn't have to wait so long for the next train!"

Learning Society Ways.

Congressman Wayback—"What ■ these letters on this card mean?"

Secretary—"That means that the lady is at the hotel, and would like to have you call."

Congressman Wayback—"Certainly, certainly, with pleasure, just as soon as I can get ready. Send her my card, and mark it P. D. Q."



Simeon Monk, the Barber—"Hair's gettin' pretty long, sir. Trim it up a little?"

Leo Africanus—"Nope. Just dropped in on my way home to get a clean shave. The missus doesn't like to have me bearded in my den."

Anything to Oblige.

Mr. Greatman—"I wish you'd stop printing my portrait every time any little thing happens to me, or else get a new one. You've had that old plate in seventeen times."

Editor—"All right, my dear sir. Anything to oblige."

Assistant Foreman (a week later)—"I can't find that picture of Sam, the sneak thief, anywhere."

Foreman—"Well, dump in that old picture of Mr. Greatman. It isn't going to be used for him any more."

❧

He Might Live Too Long.

Old Hardcash—"Yes, Miss Youngthing has given me some encouragement; at least, she hasn't refused me. She says she first wishes to see my family Bible. I presume she wants to make sure that I am no older than I say."

Friend—"No, she doesn't."

"Eh! Then what can she want?"

"She wants to see if you come of a long-lived family."

❧

Impressive Byplay.

Miss Wayback—"Say, maw, there's Mrs. Finestile comin' to call."

Mrs. Wayback—"Hurry upstairs, an' w'en she knocks jus' open the window an' look out to see who it is. We'll let her know we're rather particular about whom we admit."

❧

Not Ungentle.

Wife—"How do you like the cake?"
Husband—"H'm! What's it called?"
"Sunshine cake."
"Very nice; but, if I were you, I'd not try it on such a cloudy day, next time."

❧

[illegible]

Freddy—"Is Dolly Dimple a foreigner?"

Teddy—"Yes, she's a Laplander."

A Good Man Gone.

Stranger—"Quite a large funeral, I see."

Mr. Rural—"Yaas, sir; but 'tain't as big as it would 'a' been if all of us could have left our work. I just tell you, Cross-Roads has lost a mighty good citizen. We'll never see his equal."

"That's very sad."

"Yaas, sir. The good old deacon is gone. He always kept his fences tight, and his chickens' wings clipped."

❧

A Friendly Tip.

Mistress—"I don't want you to have so much company. You have more callers in a day than I have in a week."

Domestic—"Well, mum, perhaps if you'd try to be a little more agreeable, you'd have as many friends as I have."

■

Smoothing His Path.

Gus—"You never had spunk enough to make a proposal in your life. Why did you tell Miss Prettie that you were engaged to two girls?"

George—"So she'd want to get me away from them."

❧

A Financial Question.

"Is this the Union Dime Savings Bank?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want to know if a nonunion man can deposit in your bank."

Knew It Once.

The detective had congratulated the housewife for bringing about the arrest of a noted sneak thief.

"Oh, I knew he [illegible] a crook the minute he opened his mouth," she replied smilingly.

"How did you spot him so quickly?"

"Why, he told me the gas company had sent him to examine our meter and see if we were not entitled to a rebate."

❧

Poor Tommy.

"It's enough to make a fellow sore," remarked Tommy. "Yesterday was pa and ma's wooden wedding and nearly all the neighbors sent shingles."

Culture and Cooking.

Husband—"What stuff this pudding is! Where did you get the recipe?"

Cultured Wife (calmly)—"When speaking of directions for preparing foods you should say receipt. When referring to medicinal prescriptions you may, if you choose, use the term recipe, from the Latin recipere—take."

Husband—"I used the word correctly. This pudding is a dose."

■

A Fatheaded Kid.

Employer—"What! You want a raise? Why, when I was an office boy, I had to work five years before I got one."

Boy—"Yessir; but perhaps you were one of those fatheaded kids that ain't worth a raise."

❧

Caught a Prize.

Father—"I've just found out that the strange young man who comes to see you has been borrowing money right and left."

Daughter—"Isn't that lovely? He must be a nobleman in disguise."

❧

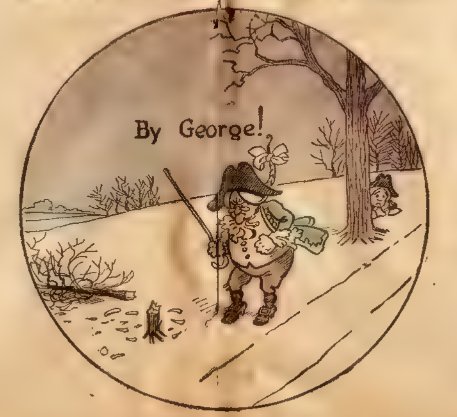
Looking Forward.

"If you are a good boy you may become President of the United States," said the patronizing relative.

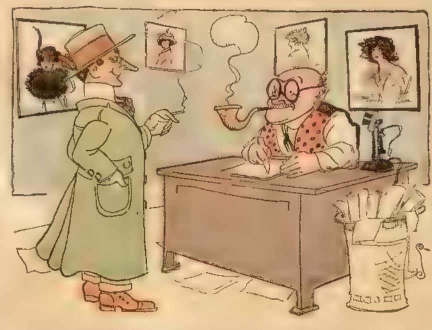
"Supposin' I'm not a good boy?"

"Well, then I'll look forward to seeing you in our State Legislature."

A WASHINGTON BIRTHDAY INCIDENT



(Probable origin of the well-know cuss-word.)



Caller—"Has there been a fairly large output of poetry lately?

Magazine Editor—"Yes, I have thrown three poets downstairs this morning."

Allowing Him Room.

"Now, lemme see," said the rural justice, figuring on the back of an old envelope. "Your bill will come to jest—forty-seven dollars."

"Forty-seven dollars?" echoed Wigglethorpe. "Why, Judge, the fine for overspeeding is only fifteen dollars."

"Ya'as, I know," said the justice. "The thutty-two dollars is fer contempt o' court."

"But I haven't expressed any contempt for this court," protested Wigglethorpe.

"Not yit ye haven't," grinned the justice, "but ye will, my friend, ye will before ye git a mile out o' town. I've made the fine putty stiff so's t' give ye plenty o' room to move round in."

❧

Every One Knew.

"My wife lost her purse with fifteen dollars in it today," said a sad-looking man.

"While going to town or coming home?" inquired a sympathizer.

"Didn't I say it had some money in it?" answered the sad-looking man, and every one knew when she lost it.

❧

Discriminating.

"Does your little boy always say his prayers before he goes to sleep?"

"Yes. And he has us all at his beck and call for fear he'll omit us from his list of people for whom he invokes particular blessings."

■

Sure to Be Profitable.

"When I grow up," said Bob. "I'm going to be an architect and draw pictures of big houses, and make other people build 'em and pay me for letting 'em do it."

❧

Indefinite.

"How old are you, Mary?"
"Two years younger than Sammy."
"Well, what's his age?"
"I don't know."

His Nationality.

Two old cronies had been sitting in a cafe on Cortlandt street one Saturday afternoon for several hours, and were pretty much the worse for their lengthy tete-a-tete.

"What is your nationality, anyway, Jim?" asked one.

"Well, I'll tell you, Bob. My father came from Glasgow, so I'm half Scotch——"

"And the other half seltzer, I guess," put in his companion.

❧

Nothing Lost.

Mrs. Youngwife—"A friend has sent me a basket of quinces, and I don't know how to use them."

Mrs. Oldwife—"Nothing is simpler. Pare and core them, make preserves of the best pieces, marmalade of the others, and jelly of the cores and peelings."

Mrs. Youngwife—"Well, I declare! And what shall I make of the basket they came in?"

❧

Reason Enough.

Old Gentleman—"What do you mean, sir, by marrying my daughter, and trying to keep it secret?"

Young Hansom—"I am fond of good living, and didn't want the waiter girls at my boarding house to find out that I was married."

■

The Safe Way.

Class in Geography—"John, describe the route you would have to follow to get to the Martinique Islands."

"I first proceed to New York——"

"Well, and then?"

"Then I go on board a steamer and leave the rest to the captain."

❧

Eliminating Death's Horror.

The Excelsior fiddling band has started on its rehearsals to get ready to play for the hog killings this winter. With this music being rendered, the hogs seem not to care to live any longer.

A Landlord in Gloom.

Wife—"Who was that who called?"

Husband—"One of my tenants came to pay his rent."

"Did he pay it?"

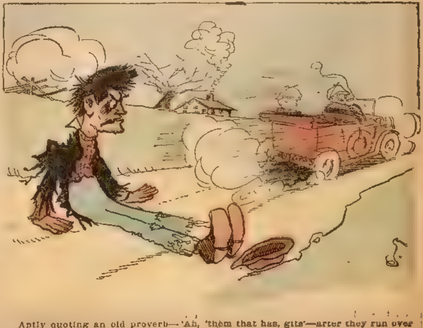
"Yes."

"Then why do you look so gloomy?"

"He didn't say a word about wanting five or six hundred dollars' worth of repairs."

"What of it?"

"That shows that he is going to leave."



Aptly quoting an old proverb—"Ah, 'them that has, gits'—after they run over a feller."

The Cabalistic Hand

Or, Telltale Fingerprints - By George Ethelbert Walsh

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CHAPTER XX.

BUT the following morning we made another discovery, which completely changed our plans and made us wonder, after all, if Meteso would be so easily unearthed and his story of the stolen serpent obtained; a discovery that increased our admiration for the wonderful skill of the man, and by the same token intensified our apprehension concerning his purposes in visiting us. We had retired as usual, Maxine spending a few minutes in the office to sort out some papers after I left, and then turning in to get a good night's sleep. The office was locked, and the servants were all in bed before eleven o'clock, an hour before we closed up.

When I entered the room shortly before eight, I found Maxine standing before the fireplace, puzzling at a white sheet of paper he held in his hands, and scowling as though considerably put out about something.

"Montague," he greeted, "he was here again last night."

"Who? Meteso?"

He nodded, and continued:

"He left this on my desk in plain sight."

He handed me the sheet of paper that was causing the little lines of worry on his face.

I started violently at the sight of it. The whole hand of our enemy was imprinted on the paper—palm, fingertips, thumb, everything. It was spread out fan-shape, as if the owner had sought to make a perfect print for us. The hand and fingers had been dipped in lampblack and then pressed firmly but carefully on the white sheet. No better impression of a complete hand could have been taken by the police at headquarters for filing away. It showed every line and mark down to the smallest detail.

"How could he get in here?" I gasped, as I took in the full significance of the hand.

I looked up at the window; it was still carefully boarded up as we had left it. Maxine divining my unexpressed inquiry remarked:

"No, he didn't come in through the window. Everything is just as we left it. It would be physically impossible for him to withdraw those nails and then replace them after he left. I think we can eliminate the window as a means of getting in and out."

"Then the door?" I asked, turning to that.

"It was locked when I came down, just as it was when we left it last night. Moreover, it was locked with the new combination lock I put on yesterday, and no one knows the combination of it, except myself—not even you, Montague."

I stood in dumbfounded surprise, looking from the door to the window, and from there to the fireplace.

"I have been measuring the fireplace," Maxine said, following my eyes. "The flue is exactly six by eight inches. Now there is no man or boy living who could squeeze down that and climb up it again."

I could say nothing; the thing was so puzzling and uncanny that I was unable to articulate a word.

"I found the sheet of paper spread out on my desk when I entered this morning," Maxine continued, "held down by the paper-weight to keep it from blowing away. It was placed there to attract our attention."

"What does it mean?" I asked, in consternation. "Is it another warning?"

"I don't know, Montague. That interests me less than how the paper got here."

He moved toward the broken window and began examining the boards again, studying each nail we had driven in the wood the previous evening. Then he began measuring the distance from the window to his desk.

"A bamboo fishpole, Montague," he observed thoughtfully, "might reach from the window to the desk. But if it was pushed through one of those cracks between the boards I can't see how the paper-weight was lifted and placed on top."

"No fishhook could lift the paper-weight," I replied, looking at the heavy glass square.

"The only available space open is this crack," Maxine continued, pointing to a space between two boards, "and it's barely wide enough to admit a lead pencil. It must have been an unusual fish-pole."

He discarded this theory and shook his head slowly. I saw him examining the ceiling and then the floor, but there were no secret trapdoors in our own house that we did not know about.

"Meteso is a greater genius than I imagined," he muttered. "Montague, he appears to perform miracles with the greatest ease."

"The Orientals have many queer tricks that astonish Western nations," I murmured. "Perhaps this is one of them. Meteso is an Oriental, I imagine."

"Yes, he's a Jap. I made certain of that last night when I pursued him."

"They have queer ways of making things vanish and reappear," I added, trying to recall some of the tricks I had seen or heard about.

"Yes, but there's an explanation to all of them. They don't perform anything supernatural. Even the tricks of the Yogis have all been explained. They are simply delusions of the senses, and nothing else."

"But this is clearly a miracle," I replied.

"When I said a miracle, Montague," he said, with a smile, "I had no intention of being taken literally. Meteso's miracle is explainable undoubtedly, but we don't happen to have the key to it. We must find that before we go wandering off into the supernatural and supernormal. That paper came in either through the door or the window. The question is—which, and how?"

I shook my head and refused to venture an answer. Once more Maxine studied the window and the lock on the door. He worked the combination several times, and tried to open it with other combinations; but it would not respond to anything but the right letters and numbers. It was a combination such as used in safe deposit vaults, and was not intended for an ordinary door; but Maxine had put it on himself to keep our mysterious intruder out of the office.

"The only other one who knows anything about this combination is the man who made the lock," he said, "and I don't think he'd come here or betray the secret to Meteso."

Maxine was clearly worried. He paced up and down the room, and repeatedly renewed his examination of door and window; but there was absolutely nothing to indicate how the visitor had gained entrance. He even examined the door jamb and the carpet for any signs of footprints or hand marks, but with equally futile results. Then he turned to the fireplace again, and stood there a long time studying it.

"A small animal like a monkey might climb down that flue," he said slowly, "and with the help of a small chain he could get up again. But it's inconceivable that Meteso could train any animal to do his bidding to the extent of entering this room and placing that sheet of paper on the desk with the paper-weight on top. Yet how else did it get here?"

The problem presented for our solution seemed to grow more perplexing the longer we studied it. There was apparently nothing that would cast the feeblest ray of light on it. Instead of spending the morning hunting up Meteso, Maxine paced the floor of the office trying to find some clew to this new mystery.

As for my part, I was apprehensive lest this last message of Meteso should be accompanied by another violent demonstration of his skill in concocting ingenious death-dealing instruments. I spent more time searching for some hidden danger than in trying to solve the mystery of the paper's appearance. But I was as unsuccessful in my search as Maxine was in his.

"What does the paper indicate?" I asked finally, when all my resources were exhausted.

"Nothing, Montague," he replied, in a dull voice. "It was left here simply to show us how easily Meteso could enter the room. If we can find how the paper was put here, we may discover something else. Until we get on the right clew we're safe."

"Then," I said with a smile, "I hope we won't stumble upon the clew."

Maxine said nothing, but became lost in deep thought. I left him there in a brown study. The morning was advancing, and I had other work to do. A couple of hours later, when I returned, he was still quietly reclining in his easy chair with an absorbed expression on his face. He looked up, sighed as if he had just awakened from a deep sleep, and said:

"Montague, I've seen Meteso before. It comes back to me almost like a conviction. I've seen him in real life or in my dreams."

"I've seen him in my dreams a good many times lately," I replied, with a grim smile. "Perhaps I wouldn't recognize him from my dreams, but he was the same man that I've been thinking and dreaming about."

"I didn't mean it quite in that way, Montague. Of course, I've tried to imagine what our invisible enemy looked like, and have constructed a mind picture of him a dozen times before. But his face is familiar to me—his eyes, nose, and the pockmarks on his face. Yes, I've met him somewhere, but the worst of it is I can't recall any of the incidents connected with it."

"That's evidence enough that it was all in a dream that you saw him," I replied facetiously.

"I don't agree with you, Montague. I seldom forget a face, and any impression lasts. But the strange thing of it is that, while I usually recall instantly the circumstances under which I have met a person, this one baffles me. I can't remember anything about him. Yet I'm

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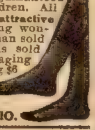

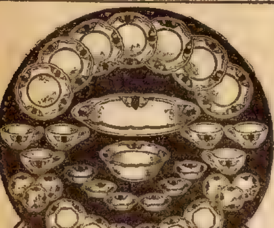

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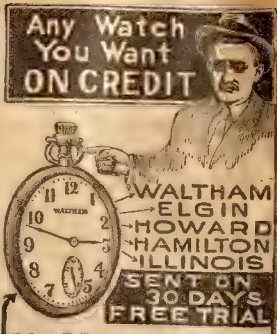

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positive that somewhere I've met Meteso and conversed with him."

I was well aware of Maxine's fertile mind and retentive memory for recalling faces and events, but in this instance I concluded that he was confusing Meteso with somebody else. If they had met in real life, the circumstances would, as he confessed, return to him quickly.

"But that is of less importance," I said "just now than where Meteso is at this moment and what connection he had with this little incident. Aren't we losing time in not hunting him up? He may leave the city at any moment."

"Yes, we decided to find him, and get from him his story. [illegible] quite right, Montague. We [illegible] the morning in idle speculation. Meteso must be found at once."

"Would it not be wise to send out a general alarm for him? Inspector McGonigle's men could help locate him by your description. There are not many Japs [illegible]."

"No, I don't think I'll call in the police [illegible]. It's my private affair so [illegible] we may consult headquarters."

[illegible], Maxine, but it would [illegible] if we had the help of the [illegible]

[illegible] will find Meteso before another day, unless he has left the city.'

'I'm afraid after last night's occurrence, you'll find he's decided to decamp. [illegible] if he's in the city.'

I did not accompany Maxine in his search for Meteso. [illegible] hunting down a criminal in the foreign [illegible] he always [illegible] tended to [illegible] suspicion, and that is the [illegible] detective desires. Apparently forgetting the problem which had bothered him all the morning, he suddenly became alert [illegible] his quest. When he finally [illegible] the house he was smiling and the [illegible] of worry had entirely vanished [illegible].

"Meteso and I may [illegible] a prolonged [illegible] Montague," he said quietly, "and if I'm delayed, don't [illegible] and call up [illegible]. I'll be back when I'm ready to [illegible]."

He was gone all the rest of the day, and when night came he was still absent, but that did not give me any anxiety. Once or twice I did stop long enough to think of Meteso and his cunning; it caused me a little apprehension in spite of my faith in Maxine, for had not the wily foe shown wonderful ingenuity and resource in baffling us? What [illegible] innumerable eyes out watching and dogging Maxine's steps at every turn, ready to pounce upon him at word from the master rogue? Invisible, cunning eyes must have hovered over us, for while we slept Meteso or some of his agents came and went, entering the house with impunity and leaving fingerprint marks behind. They seemed to laugh at locked doors and bolted windows, and whether it was the coal cellar of the Seldon house or our own office, nothing we could do seemed to bar them out. The mystery of how they effected an entrance was as disturbing as the meaning of the fingerprints left behind.

I had no doubt in my mind that it was not Meteso alone; he was working through many agents who watched and shadowed us at every turn. The fingerprints were always those of the master, who planned and directed, but his underlings helped to set the scene and prepare the way for him.

It was the thought that perhaps Maxine was thus being shadowed and followed in his hunt for the wily Jap in the very heart of the city's criminal quarters that caused me a little uneasiness as night drew on apace. Maxine's genius was being matched by that of another, who, if not equal to him in this respect, was worthy of his best efforts; but the latter had the advantage of numbers, while Maxine was working alone. Still I had seen the master detective of two continents up against seemingly impossible conditions before, and with the [illegible] skill of his kind he turned the tables upon his enemies, and by sheer force of will changed adverse factors into favorable ones.

Nine o'clock came, and Maxine was still absent. He had been gone ten hours, but what are ten hours of time in which to [illegible] the purlieus of a city to find a single person? Sometimes it took the police a week to accomplish the result.

Ten o'clock struck, and I started at the sound of the small gong and consulted my watch to see if the time was correct. To amuse myself I took out the charts of the rare fingerprints we had collected of our invisible foe, and for a long time I was absorbed in studying them.

Eleven o'clock, and a step outside attracted my attention. I listened attentively, but when it ceased I sighed in disappointment. I began speculating as to whether Meteso would visit the office in the absence of Maxine and attempt to leave another warning hint behind. It would perhaps be just like him. While Maxine sought him in the foreign quarters, the rogue might be hovering about [illegible] home at that very moment, diabolically grinning at the new trick played on him.

I confess the thought of this caused me an unpleasant half-hour. I grew [illegible] and nervous, for the thought [illegible] pair of invisible eyes watching me from some obscure point was not pleasant. I got up and walked to the window and peered through one of the cracks, and then returned to my seat, but a moment later I opened the door into the hall and walked to the front entrance.

All was quiet outside, and the street was bathed in the soft glow of an electric arc lamp suspended from a tall pole at the corner. A few pedestrians strolled along, and an automobile swung around the corner and with a warning honk of the horn passed and disappeared in the shadowy distance. A policeman on his fixed post at the corner showed his blue uniform for an instant, and then quietly faded away in the shadows of a neighboring doorway.

There was certainly nothing outside or inside to cause any one alarm. I tried to dismiss my foolishness, and picked up the collection of fingerprints to file them away in their cabinet again. But the sight of them brought up the incidents of the past so strongly that once more the old feeling of some invisible, impalpable presence hovering over the room obsessed me. Finally I flung the prints in the case, and closed the door with a snap.

At the same instant the outer door opened, and Maxine's footsteps sounded in the hall. I was so glad to see him that I rushed to the door and flung it open.

"Did you find Meteso?" I asked eagerly.

The drawn, haggard face which confronted me answered my question better than words.

"Meteso has fled the city, Montague," he replied, entering the room and blinking at the light. "Or—" and his voice almost failed him— "or he's baffled me again. I couldn't find him, and yet I rounded up every Jap in the city."

"Perhaps," I said, remembering my recent suspicions, "he's been here all the time in this house or near it?"

"You have seen him, or heard him?" Maxine gasped, jumping up suddenly and facing me.

"No," I answered hastily, "but on the principle that your house would be the safest place for him at such a time, I merely suggested that he might be [illegible] ing near."

Maxine sat down again and sighed.

"I don't think so," he replied. "Meteso has fled from the city."

"Then he won't visit us again tonight to leave his fingerprints," I added, with a smile. "That's one relief."

A slow, cunning expression entered Maxine's face, and for a moment he glared at me in silence.

"Perhaps he will come, Montague," he said. "It would be a bold thing to do, but he's not lacking in that. After hiding from me all day, baffling me in the search, he might take it into his head to flaunt his defiance in my face. I think, Montague, I will sit up in the office. You retire as usual, Montague, and I will hold vigil here. If he comes—we may meet in the final scene."

CHAPTER XXI

WE SAT up for half an hour discussing our plans and the adventures of the

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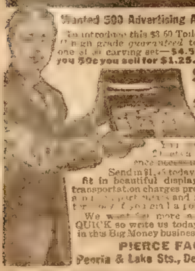

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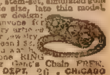

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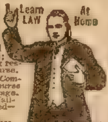

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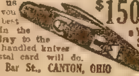

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day, and then both of us retired to our rooms. When the house was all in darkness, I heard Maxine creep downstairs, and a moment later the door of his office opened and clicked behind him. If Meteso visited the place during the night, he would be nabbed, for Maxine would have the advantage of being prepared and his presence in the office unsuspected.

I did not prepare myself in the usual way for bed, for I wanted to be ready for any emergency, and the first sound of a struggle in the office would be the signal for me to dash down to Maxine's assistance. I turned out the light, and flung myself on the bed to wait and listen. I intended to keep vigil as well as Maxine. The door of my room was left ajar so that the slightest noise downstairs would reach me.

The quietness of midnight settled over the city, and with the exception of an occasional rattle of a wagon's wheels or the honk of a horn from some passing automobile, there was little to disturb one. Once or twice I was aroused from half-dreamy reflections by sounds that were suspicious. I was almost positive once that the lock of the office clicked, and I crept out into the hall to listen; but for a quarter of an hour nothing happened. I turned back and re-entered my room. Thereafter the little noises of a sleeping city only broke the silence—sounds, which, magnified by nerves and the imagination, seemed to contain some uncanny significance.

Keeping vigil throughout the small hours of night, expecting something to happen every minute, produces a peculiar sort of hypnotic sensitiveness. There is a whole world of sounds that we do not take in consciously when awake, but under the influence of an anxious vigil we hear them and magnify them.

Finally, I adjusted myself to this new world of small sounds, and as a consequence my mind wandered and I became drowsy. I even dozed, off and on, but only for brief intervals. From one of these moments of mental lapses, I was aroused by a noise that sent the cold chills down my back.

It was the wild, uncanny laugh, half human and half animal, accompanied by a low growl, that had so terrified me on the first night when we found the paper on the desk with the rude bomb drawing sketched roughly on it. It was a terrifying noise then; but it was ten times more so now, in the light of subsequent events. Whether it was man or beast, I could not say; but for a moment it almost paralyzed me with nameless fear.

Then realizing that Maxine was below, and that the cry came from the office, I jumped to my feet, and with trembling hands seized my gun and pocket electric flashlight. Once out in the hall, I stopped long enough to listen again, but all was quiet below just as it had been on a previous occasion.

I turned the electric flash toward the stairs, and took in the whole scene of the lower hall; but there was nothing unusual or disturbing in view. The hall below was deserted. Up and down it I turned the light, until I had explored every nook and corner.

Swiftly and silently I descended the stairs, flashing the light intermittently to see my way and reveal anything that might appear. At the foot of the stairs I found myself up against the closed door of Maxine's office. It was locked with the combination lock. For just an instant I wavered. Had I been deceived by my imagination? Was I fully awake? If not I did not want to draw attention to my weakness by arousing Maxine.

I knew that I was fully awake, and I knew that I had not been deceived by my senses; that growl and laugh could not be fiction. It was as real as the door which now faced me or the flash of light I had directed up and down the hall.

"Maxine!" I called softly, knocking on the door.

There was no response from within, and I knocked louder and raised my voice to a higher pitch. The servants lived in an entirely separate part of the house, and they would not be disturbed by my calling; but I did not want to appear too excited before Maxine.

But there was no response from within, and I soon found myself kicking and pounding vigorously on the door.

"Maxine! Open the door!" I cried. "Wake up, Maxine! Wake up!"

I had no doubt that, wearied by the day's experience and the long vigil, he had fallen asleep, and I pounded and called for the purpose of awakening him. Getting no response after several moments of the most vigorous pounding, I became suddenly alarmed at the silence within. For the first time it occurred to me that something had happened in the office that might spell tragedy. I shook the doorknob and renewed my demonstration.

"Maxine, if you're in there, open the door!" I shouted finally. "If not, I'm going to break in!"

Unable to get any reply, and suspicious of the silence, I finally threw myself against the door. It creaked on its hinges, but did not yield. Hoping that the sudden crash would bring some answering recognition, I waited a moment in silent expectation; but as everything continued as quiet as the grave, I became genuinely alarmed. Something had happened to Maxine to make him deaf to all my appeals; he was either killed or seriously wounded.

Without waiting for further words, I drew back and launched the whole weight of my body against the solid oak door. There was not much hope of breaking through the thick panels, but the hinges or lock would weaken under such fierce assaults. Once, twice, thrice I flung my body against it, and in the fourth impact the lock snapped, and the door flew inward.

Before stepping across the threshhold, I stood a minute to regain my composure. I almost dreaded to face the tragedy which I feared confronted me. Then raising my electric bulb, I turned the searchlight full upon the interior of the office. Its rays cut a clean path of light through the darkness and revealed one object after another. The chair which Maxine often reclined in, the desk, the lounging sofa, the big, easy swivel reading chair, the filing cabinet—one after another these objects came into view as I swept the path of light around—but there was no sign of Maxine. Up and down the room I played the lamp, and then with a little exclamation of surprise and fear, I jumped into the room, and finding the electric button, switched on a flood of dazzling light.

Maxine was not in the room! I looked behind the sofa, under the table, back of portieres, and in every conceivable hiding-place; but Maxine was not there. Moreover, the room showed no disorder, no signs of a scuffle or struggle, nothing to indicate that anything unusual had happened.

I stood a moment in blank surprise, blinking and twitching, and trying to collect my scattered wits. What had happened? Ah, the window! I hastened to it; but it was boarded up as securely as when we parted early in the evening. No one had gone through it or entered by it. The door had been locked, and no one knew the combination of it except the owner.

Where was Maxine? I asked myself that question again and again, but could fit no reply to it. He had disappeared as completely and mysteriously as if spirited away. Something strange and uncanny had transpired; it seemed the climax to our mysterious adventures with the implacable enemy. Was this to be the end of it all?

I stood there shivering, as though stricken with the chills and fever, my teeth chattering, and my nerve completely gone. If I had any tangible clew—anything to fix my mind definitely on—I could have banished the strange, morbid fear that seemed to paralyze me. It was the unknown—the mystery of it all—that oppressed and completely unnerved me.

From this mental condition I roused myself, and began calling half frantically: "Maxine! Maxine!"

I ran out into the hall and turned on the light, and then upstairs until every room of the house was flooded with light; but Maxine was not in the house. How long I labored under this mood, half of fear and half of morbid anxiety, I do not know; but as I gradually calmed down, I began to reason with myself that a normal explanation of the whole thing would be forthcoming in time.

"Maxine may have gone out," I reflected. "Perhaps he heard the growl and laugh, and pursued the intruder—man or beast, whichever it was—and will return shortly. Yes, that is the reasonable explanation of it."

Gradually I became ashamed of my lack of self-control, and experienced a decided reaction of feelings. I even tried to smile and assume a self-satisfied air. The relief of overstrung nerves made me at least quieter and easier of mind.

I tried to fix up the lock which I had broken, and to repair other damages to the door. Then with the light turned down in all the rooms except the office, I helped myself to a little brandy and water. I could not sleep or return to my room. I would finish the vigil in the office that Maxine had left; I would wait for his reappearance or the return of the intruder.

This vigil proved more trying than the previous one, for the excitement of the past hour and the recurring fear that something terrible had happened to Maxine kept me in a state of doubt and anxiety that drove me nearly crazy. Once more I found myself listening to every little noise, and magnifying it so that, when the clock struck two, I jumped to my feet with a little suppressed cry of alarm. I looked stupidly at the clock and dropped back in my seat in a dripping perspiration. It was a senseless fear, perhaps, but one that was natural under the circumstances.

In the midst of my nervousness that terrifying, blood-curdling growl and demoniacal laugh reached my ears once more. As it came to me out of the distance, I sprang to my feet with a little shriek. I could not tell whether it was in the room upstairs or outdoors. I was in too great mortal fear to locate the sound definitely.

I knew that whatever the thing was—man or beast, Meteso or one of his agents—it was not far away. I gripped my pistol and stood on the defensive, ready to use it the moment anything

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showed. With head craned forward to catch a repetition of it, I waited in this breathless attitude, rigid and taut as a fiddlestring, with the feeling that I might snap at any moment if anything should break the silence again.

It did come again, the low growl and laugh, and nothing happened to me, except possibly that my nerves received another twist, and I turned my head toward the window. The person—or thing—was outside, and not within the room. It was pitched lower this time, and had a more human note to it. It was like the muffled laugh of one who triumphed over a fallen enemy, gloating in the victory, and ready to drive home the last death blow. The location of the noise outside gave me more courage.

Still shaking with nameless fear, ears alert and every sense on the quiver, I stood by the window vainly trying to catch another repetition of the uncanny sound. Soft, catlike footsteps sounded on the pavement, and something rubbed gently against the side of the house.

I expected to see a form materialize out of space or project itself through the solid boards of the window, or perhaps squeeze itself through one of the narrow crevices or knotholes. I was not sure just what developments would follow; but I thought I was prepared for almost any demonstration.

Instead of any of these things happening, a noise in front caused me suddenly to swing around, and as I did so the street door opened and in walked Maxine. I was too startled and relieved to utter a word. I stood there in dumb surprise. The reaction left me weak and helpless as well as voiceless.

But if my surprise was great at seeing him enter, it was enhanced a hundredfold when his face came in the full glare of the hall light, and I caught a fair glimpse of it. Pale, haggard and drawn, it was; but more than that, it was marked by strange, unnatural lines which I hardly recognized. The eyes had a stare that seemed to go through you without seeing you—a faraway, hypnotic gaze that gave an almost uncanny aspect to his whole features.

"Maxine," I whispered, but my voice was so weak that it could not carry a foot from me.

Without looking to the right or left, he hurried with catlike treads to the stairs, and ascended them swiftly and noiselessly. He was gone almost before I had time to gather my wits. I heard him rummaging about in his room above, as I remained motionless, listening.

Something unusual had happened. Maxine was worked up to a pitch that made him merely a human working machine; he had neither eyes nor ears for anybody. I realized the same strange noises that had frightened me had attracted his attention. Perhaps he had been on the trail of this mysterious creature and had met him face to face. He could not have looked worse if he had met a ghost. Something uncanny and supernatural must have created that drawn attitude of fear, mystery, and cunning that gleamed from his eyes.

In that moment of temporary physical and mental paralysis, I must have acted like a man bereft of his senses, for I stood there in the office in the attitude of one turned suddenly into stone. I made no motion to move and follow Maxine. Great as my anxiety was to learn the cause of his going and coming, I could not follow him; neither could I cry out or voice the emotions that were tugging at my mind.

This species of temporary paresis held me until a footfall on the stairs above sounded once more. As though held in bondage by some horrible nightmare, I seemed to be able to project my mind into space. I knew that Maxine was descending the stairs with the same quiet, stealthy tread, scarcely making a sound as he glided along. I was not surprised when his lean, white face appeared, nor startled this time when I saw the old gleam in the eyes. I merely watched and waited, as if expecting some development that I knew must come, but could not fathom.

But when he moved swiftly from the stairs to the street door, and opened it quietly and slipped out into the night, I gave a violent start and broke the invisible bonds that held me. I shook off the spell, and started forward with a little cry of fear

"Maxine!" I called sharply. "Maxine!"

But I addressed only the closed door. Maxine had disappeared through it. For an instant I stood facing the door in mute anguish, as if it was an impenetrable wall that separated us, and then angry at my stupidity I cursed myself for a dolt and flung it wide open. Down the street I could see a shadow moving swiftly and silently, following the shadows of the row of houses opposite.

With little thought of my appearance—hatless and coatless— I dashed down the steps and started in pursuit of the vanishing figure.

(Continued next week.)

* * *

The Signs in Red

(Continued from page four.)

large estate, and on other farms near. Suppose that the enemy are hiding somewhere, living in a shanty—I have seen such things here and there—and suppose that judicious search could develop them? Get a look at them, and they will no longer be foes in the dark."

"Granted, but, Saywood, the day when criminals hid, as you say, is past. In this era when the automobile is king most human thugs have their car, swoop down upon their victims, do their work, and then get away at forty miles an hour or more. By morning they are one or two hundred miles distant."

"That must be admitted, but it is not an invariable rule. Bear in mind that our opponents seem to be hereabouts at all times, for they are either seen in the dark or make themselves known by their acts rather frequently."

Borrowdale was silent for a moment, and then he heartily answered.

"Try your idea, Saywood, and I'll try one of my own. I look very favorably on the notion of an auto that serves the gang, and as the road north is the only one favorable for speeding, it seems they would come that way. Now, I want to leave my butler in charge here—he will be a sufficient overseeing guard for daylight hours—and take a spin in my own car to the next village. I know the night gateman of the railroad there, and he is not only indebted to me and Miami for aid in time of sickness in his family, but is grateful and, better yet, has as observing an eye as any man I ever knew. If there has been an auto used by our enemies they probably passed by his gates, and if they did, he is just the fellow to see. He really has an abnormal sense for distinguishing an honestly-laden car from that of criminals."

I did not believe in any such uncommon sense, but I let the claim pass, nodding my supposed comprehension.

"Now," Borrowdale pursued, "I'll take you a mile along my road, and then you can drop off and try your shack theory. What do you say?

"Agreed!" I answered promptly.

We left the room, and he went to order his car, while I happened to meet Miami in the upper hall as I went to visit my room briefly.

"I've talked with Aunt Ellett," she said, with a quick nod. "Of course I told her nothing as to how serious things are, and I put the matter with such craft that she was not impressed. I was right, for she says there has been a legend that old Roger Borrowdale did construct a secret passage, but all efforts to find it since his death have failed. Her brother—he was my grandfather, you know—utterly disbelieved in it, but she is not so sure. She says Roger was a singularly odd man, and it would be like him to have a secret way out."

"Well, the secret seems to have died with him," I remarked.

"Yes. I asked Aunt Ellett if there was no other member of the family who might know, but that hope failed."

"Why?"

"Because she is the only living one of her generation, and my father and his brother the only survivors of theirs. Large families have never been seen in the Borrowdales of modern times, and, by the way, as my aunt says, most of the few were daughters. Roger was an only child, and he had but one son and only one grandson. In father's generation there were two, himself and my uncle."

"Yes."

"So you see Aunt Ellett was my only hope of getting tradition of the secret passage."

I saw that and more. If there was no other male, who was the writer of the incomplete letter I had found behind the board? He had addressed somebody as "kinsman," and the writing was not especially old. But who was he?

My slender, dark man with the chronic scoff and sneer seemed destined to drop into the realm of nonexistence. But, if so, who had been that "son of the sea" who had said he would "come again?"

My host arranged matters to his liking, with Pierson in charge, and then we went out and entered his car. He was to be his own operator, and we were soon off for the north. He ran the speed up to thirty miles, and we soon covered the distance to where I was going.

At that point he paused long enough to give me information as to the topographical features of the extensive woods beyond, as well as to mention the few shacks therein. Then he turned on the power and was whizzing away. Mechanically carrying my hand to the revolver in my pocket, I entered the woods.

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

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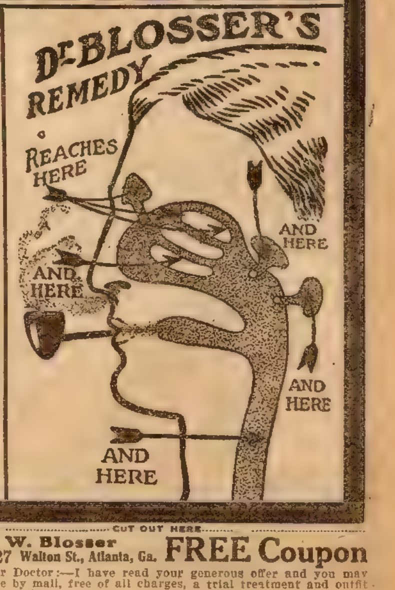

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

Uneasy lies the head that wears a frown.

A short answer seldom helps things along.

Some surgeons manage to carve out big fortunes.

Lucky is the man who doesn't depend upon his luck.

Many a man who marries for money is a poor collector.

An ounce of prevention may prevent a pound of remorse.

Happy is the home in which there is no room for doubt.

Courtship is the wine of life and divorce the morning after.

Even when money talks a woman generally gets the last word.

The old toper's pack of trouble is always full and slopping over.

Some people are too busy talking about themselves to talk about others.

Every girl has her ideal, but the difficulty is in getting him to propose.

If a man can't make a noise in the world in any other way, he shoots off his mouth.

An appeal to a man's reason may be more effective than an appeal to his pocketbook.

Some people think more of dogs than they do of their friends—and perhaps there's a reason.

A young man can sow his own wild oats, but his father usually has to pay for the harvesting.

If a woman knows that a man knows what she is going to do next she invariably does something else.

If the wolf that hangs around a poor man's door could only be trained to convert bill collectors into mincemeat!

Our idea of a promoter is a chap who buys a gold brick at a bargain and unloads it on some other chap at a profit.

Experience is man's best teacher, but she keeps his pants frazzled out at the heels hustling around to pay the tuition fees.

"What is so rare as a day in June?" asks the poet. We don't know—unless it is praise for a man who has been dead a year.

One of the pleasures a woman gets out of being in the social swim is the intensity with which her neighbors who are not in it hate her.

When a lawyer is retained in a breach of promise case, he realizes that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have had a chance to show up in court.

PEPPERS

Not Real Fighting.

The conversation drifted to domestic infelicity, one night, when Senator Luke Lea, of Tennessee, told a story which would seem to indicate that there is a mistaken idea as to what constitutes a real family fight.

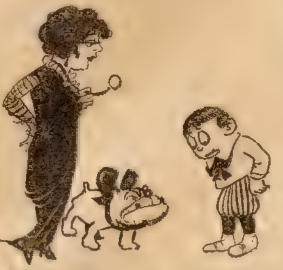
Down in one of the Southern States recently, so ran the Sanator's narrative, a colored man and his wife here haled into court on a charge of disturbing the peace.

"Rastus," said the magistrate addressing the husband, "you are accused of disturbing your entire neighborhood on Tuesday night. What have you got to say for yourself?"

"It wah dis way, Jedge," explained Rastus, glancing first at the magistrate and then at his wife. "Me an' Lucy got into an ahgument obah de coin she got fo' a week's wash. She call me a lazy loafah, an' I clap her down flat. Up she hop, an' smash a skillet on my haid, an' draps me flat. Den up I riz and welt her with a chaih leg, an' den she flang a tea kittle at me, which scald quite consid'able."

"I see," commented the magistrate to Rastus. "And then what happened?"

"An' den, Jedge," answered Rastus with great deliberation, "an' den we bergun to fight."



Mrs. Nurox—"Our new bulldog is descended from the canine aristocracy."

Little Willie Nurox—"I thought so, mother, from the way he turns up his nose at us."

A Costly Virtue.

"Uncle Joe" Cannon, apropos of Washington's Birthday, said once in Danville:

"Washington was veracious. Veracity, I suppose, worked better in those days. It's a virtue now that often costs its owner dear.

"A Danville man howled downstairs from his den the other night:

"'Who the dash-blank-asterisk went and broke my new meerschaum pipe?'

"Little Willie, mindful of the approach of February 22, shouted back in cheery tones:

"'I done it, pop. I cannot lie.'

"'You can't eh?' roared the father, rushing downstairs, strap in hand. 'Well, you won't be able to sit, either, when I'm through with you, begosh!'"

Evidence Against Him.

A prominent Boston lawyer has a 10-year-old son who seems to be treading quite closely in his father's footsteps. One day the boy told a falsehood about some boyish scrape, and his father took him aside to lecture him on the wickedness of not telling the truth. He told him the story of George Washington and the cherry tree.

"Now, Roger," he concluded, "don't you think that George was brave as well as truthful to own up to doing the deed? Give me your opinion, my son."

"Well," said Roger, seriously, "I think that the only thing he could do was to plead guilty. You see, pa, the evidence was all against him. He owned the hatchet."

Two Expirations.

The defendant, who was held on the charge of keeping a dog without a license, repeatedly tried to interrupt the evidence, but was hushed each time by the Court. Finally the clerk turned to him:

"Do you wish the Court to understand that you refuse to renew your dog license?"

"Yes, but——"

"We want no 'buts.' You must renew your license or be fined. You know it expired on Jan. 1."

"Yes, but so did the dog."

The Soap Eater.

Alfred Noyes, the English poet, tossed aside with a bitter laugh a roast of his last book.

"This critic," he said, "reminds me of the old gentleman with the cold—only this critic's cold is permanent—and, by Jove, he's not aware he's got it!

"At a club one day I was taking a wash and brush-up, when I noticed an old gentleman nibbling a cake of soap. After each nibble he would chew the soap thoughtfully, and then, smiling and nodding his head, he would say:

"Thank Heaven, it's all right!"

"I asked the old gentleman what on earth he was up to. He explained, as he nibbled away at a large pink cake:

"'Well, you see, I've had such a rotten bad cold for the last fortnight that it's quite taken away my taste. Every day, to see if I was improving, I've nibbled soap. This afternoon, for the first time, I find that soap has a quite distinct taste.' He took a large pink mouthful. 'Um-m—yes—quite distinct. Therefore I shan't go home this evening. I shall dine here at the club.'"

Embarrassed.

"Sitting by Governor Hodges," said a newspaper correspondent, "reminds me of the first time I saw the Kansas Governor. He was only State Senator then. He was called to Leavenworth to inspect the penitentiary, and I had to go down and write it up—met the Governor for the first time. The warden, by way of giving a special treat to the prisoners, had collected 700 or 800 of them in the assembly hall, and in an offhand way requested the Senator to address them.

"Mr. Hodges wasn't as proficient in politics then as he is now. He was plainly embarrassed and hesitated a minute. "My fellow citizens——" he began.

"That didn't sound right, and he commenced again. 'My fellow convicts—'

"By that time the prisoners were smiling. Mr. Hodges dropped his formal manner, and smiled, too. 'Well, I don't know exactly how to address you, boys,' he amended, 'but I'm glad to see so many of you here——'"

The Record Straight.

Cosmo Hamilton, the English playwright and novelist, was attacking woman at a studio tea in Washington square.

"Woman is barbarous," he said. "She clothes herself in the skins of cruelly slaughtered birds. She decorates herself with bits of stone dug out of the earth. She paints her face red and white. She marries for money rather than for love. All this is barbaric."

"But," objected a woman, "but Mr. Hamilton, you must admit that woman is honest. When did you ever hear of a woman stenographer or cashier running off with her employer's money?"

"Never," Mr. Hamilton answered promptly. "When a woman stenographer or cashier runs off with her employer's money, she always keeps the record straight by taking her employer along with her."

The Pride of the Nation.

A theatrical manager was praising the American chorus girl.

"She is not only prettier," said he, "than her English, or French, or Italian sister, but she is also brighter, gayer, wittier. It's a pleasure to hear her talk.

"Two chorus girls were lunching near me the other day. Their skirts were slashed, and they wore those smart, new-fangled shoes that fasten with ribbon—narrow ribbon running crisscross up their ankles.

"'I've got no use for your rah-rah college boy,' said the first chorus girl, swinging her foot in and out of her slashed swirt. 'He reminds me of a china doll.'

"'Why?' asked the other girl. 'Because he's so pink and pretty?'

"'No,' said the first chorus girl. 'Because he gets broke so soon.'"

When Women Rule.

The newly elected presidentess was talking to one of her henchwomen.

"Now, Gertie, how would you like to be ambassardress to China? They may bestow the peacock feather upon you there."

"I don't know about that. Where do they bestow ostrich plumes?"

Signs of Greatness.

"Why did George Washington's father weep when the brave lad said 'I cannot tell a lie,'?"

"For joy," replied the unsentimental person. "He realized that the youngster who knew how to put over a grand stand play like that was bound to make his way in the world."

The Only Test.

Blinkers—"Talking about aged people, there's a woman in my town who says she is one hundred and ten years old."

Winkers—"Does she remember dancing with George Washington?"

"No."

"Then she's a fraud."

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Dick o' the Dark

Or, The Night Hawks of '76

By Captain Jack Judson

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CHAPTER I.

A PASSAGE AT ARMS.

PATTER, patter, patter down a frosted red clay road that lay beneath a vault of bright stars came the sound of a horse's hoofs.

It was a night in midwinter, and there was a light snow on the ground. To the right of the road rose the ridge of the Thicketty Mountain, a chain of [illegible] hills near the northern borders of South Carolina, and not far away flowed the pretty Pacolet over its pebbly bed.

The pattering hoofs made music on the crisp air, and the rider of the mettled roan held the reins lightly and looked on both sides of the way. He was a well-built boy of seventeen, and he sat his saddle with the grace of a finished rider. Everybody in the district knew Dick Lightfoot, commonly called Dick o' the Dark, and the Tories and British of the Revolution had cause to fear him.

It was a stirring time, for the murderous Tarleton and his legion were abroad in the land and the patriots were feeling the weight of his iron hand.

Dick kept on until he reached a bend in the mountain road, when he spoke to his horse and turned to the left. In a few moments he drew rein in front of a well-to-do house, in the interior of which a light appeared. The boy sprang to the ground, threw the reins over the neck of his stead, and entered without ceremony, just as if he was always a welcome visitor there.

He was greeted with a cry of surprise by a man who occupied an armchair at the side of which rested a home-made crutch.

"Ever riding by night!" exclaimed the man, as his browned face was wreathed in smiles. "What is the mission now, boy?"

Dick o' the Dark learned against the table, and for a moment remained silent.

"Methinks there's enough astir to make one fly by night," said he. "Tarleton is pushing this way at the head of eleven hundred of his base marauders. They are after Morgan hot foot, but the old fox of liberty is watching them, and just waiting to get them into the proper trap when he will turn like a wild animal at bay."

"By my soul, boy, you bring good news!" exclaimed Eli Scruggs. "I hope Morgan will teach this butcher a lesson."

"That he will," was the assuring answer.

At that moment a tall, lean-faced man of fifty entered the room, and silence instantly fell between the pair.

"Good night, Neighbor Malloy," greeted Scruggs. "Has it stopped snowing?"

Patrick Malloy, the Tory, did not reply, for he had fixed his gaze on the boy whom he was observing with a sour expression. Dick returned the look with interest.

"I thought I recognized your horse at the door," he said, still eying Dick.

"Yes."

"You seem to have been riding hard."

"Which I have a right to do," was the snappish reply.

"No one gainsays your right," the Tory blurted. "But it seems to me that you are using up a good deal of horseflesh these times."

"No more, sir, than you use when it suits your fancy."

Malloy had stepped into the light and was surveying the young night rider from head to foot. There would have been a sharp passage of arms between the two if the door had not opened again and a young girl stepped into the apartment. At sight of her Dick crossed the room and held out his hand.

"Good night, Emily," said he, his face indicating his pleasure at the meeting. "I would have a word with you," and the young couple left the room.

In the apartment beyond Dick drew the girl to one side and said in low tones:

"I'm glad you came in when you did, Emily, for I was about to cross blades with that rascally Tory."

"And get into more trouble?" smiled Emily.

"Oh, I don't mind that!" laughed Dick. "I never keep out of trouble when it is forced upon me. Then, as you know, I don't like a hair of old Malloy's head. He has more than once set the King's men at my heels, and once they took me and placed my neck in peril."

"Just like Pat Malloy," answered the patriot girl. "But what is the news?"

"I told your uncle about Tarleton's invasion, and would have told him more if Malloy had not put in an appearance. He's coming on with his legion, making it warm for every patriot, and if he succeeds there will be bloody times in the district."

"And more work for you, Dick?"

"You are right, Emily, more work for the Night Hawks!" exclaimed Dick, proudly.

"I tell you, Neighbor Scruggs, this night marauding must be stopped!" came a loud voice from the adjoining room at that moment. "We are the strongest on the district, and Colonel Tarleton is determined to suppress rebellion in South Carolina."

Dick's face grew crimson.

"Let me go in and face the old hound!" he cried. "I'm not afraid of Pat Malloy."

"I know you are not, Dick, but have a care. He must have caught sight of you somewhere tonight, and that is why he is in the house."

"Of course he has watched me."

"We all know that he is the head Tory of these parts, willing to do the King's dirty work——"

Dick, unappeased, tried to break from the girl's grasp, but she resolutely held him fast.

"He's quiet now," she whispered. "Uncle will not rouse him, I'm sure."

"But I will if you give me a chance."

"Where is General Morgan?"

"He is falling back from Tarleton, but he is no coward. When the time comes he will show this redcoat that there is fight in the old Virginian lion."

"Well, let Pat Malloy and uncle fight it out," resumed Emily Searle. "I have some excellent johnnycake on the table, and I know you must be hungry."

"I'm always hungry when you mention johnnycake," laughed the night rider and forthwith Emily led him into the kitchen where she began to lay a little table.

Dick sat up and began to eat greedily. Emily stood by with a proud smile on her handsome face, and watched him as she chatted merrily to keep pace with his appetite.

"Yes, I've got the boys together again," Dick said between mouthfuls. "They are very vigilant now. We will show Bannister Tarleton that he must conquer the boys of Old Thickettly before he subdues the country."

"Yes, I know you will give him all the trouble you can; Dick. It is the Tory sentiment that keeps the district in an uproar."

"They are constantly on the alert, and the moment Tarleton comes they will give all the aid and comfort possible."

When the meal was finished Dick rose and cast a look toward the door.

"I'm going down on the Pacolet tonight," said he. "I sent Martin word that I would meet him at the ford at a certain hour. It's business, Emily, and I don't want to disappoint him."

Bidding the girl good-by, Dick slipped from the house and went to where he had rested his horse. The faithful animal had waited for him, and whinnied softly as he came up. He was about to spring to the saddle when he heard a footstep behind him.

"Just a moment, boy," said a voice.

"Two of them if you wish," said Dick, as he turned and stood face to face with Patrick Malloy.

The tall, Tory came forward with fire flashing from his eyes. He looked taller than ever to Dick.

"I see you're still night hawking!" he exclaimed, halting within a few feet of the boy. "You'll have to be disciplined if this work isn't stopped."

"Well, how are you going to stop it?" defied Dick.

"You'll see when Tarleton comes."

Dick's indignation was oozing out of his finger ends.

"If your Colonel Tarleton can stop my night riding, he's welcome to do so. Perhaps you had best go to him with my compliments, and tell him that Dick Lightfoot will ride when and where he pleases."

"Have a care!" was the retort, and Malloy would have laid his hand on the boy's shoulder if he had not jerked away.

"Don't touch me, sir!" exclaimed Dick. "Your very touch is contagion."

Malloy's face purpled. "You'll have to be trimmed down," he exploded. "If you were my son——"

"I thank Heaven I'm no kin of yours," broke in the youth. "If I had Malloy blood in my veins, I'd let it out."

"Such words to me," roared Malloy. "I'll loosen every bone in your Rebel body!"

With this the speaker made a dive for Dick, who nimbly avoided him and reached his horse.

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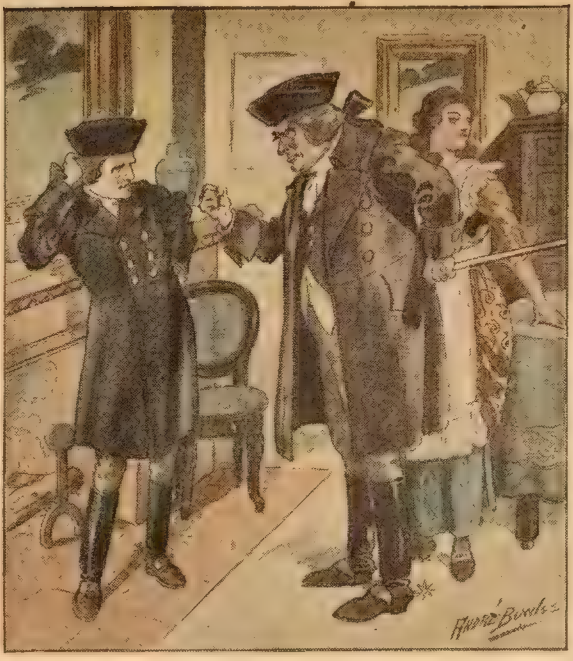

"Say, we'll hang you yet!"

The Tory seized Dick by the leg, and was trying to pull him from the saddle, when the agile boy swung out his hand and laid it so heavily upon the lean face that it's possessor measured himself on the ground.

"Dick Lightfoot's compliments!" cried the youth, as he dealt the blow and dashed away.

"Good! good!" exclaimed a voice at the nearest window, and Emily Searle clapped her hands, while the Tory rose to his feet and made the air blue with horrid epithets.

But Dick o' the Dark was already out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

DICK MAKES A PLUCKING.

DICK O' THE DARK proceeded on his way, laughing to himself at his encounter with Patrick Malloy. In all the region there was no more pestiferous Tory than this man who had incurred the hatred of every patriot. It was known that his house was the rendezvous of the King's men from far and near, and nothing was left undone that would aid the royal cause. He had organized a band of men known as the Night Vultures, and more than one dark deed had been credited to them and with good reason.

They had followed Dick time and again, and on several occasions had given trouble. The young Night Hawk feared them not, but at the same time he was obliged to watch them closely, for they were capable of doing much harm.

Dick had ridden nearly three miles when he drew rein and leaned forward in his saddle. From some point ahead came the strains of a song, and he listened with a smile on his lips.

"Tiny Tom is abroad," said he to himself, as the singing increased in volume, "and it is said there is no danger where he sings."

Every word of the ballad was plain, and Dick caught it on the wings of the night wind:

"Bold Tarleton rides to meet his doom,
    With all his men in red,
And Morgan waits to leave the foe
    Within the forest dead."

Tiny Tom was composer as well as singer, and his ballads were known and sung throughout the entire South.

"He's coming this way," thought Dick, as he waited beneath a great tree, and sure enough hoofbeats soon fell upon his ears.

All at once the blended forms of a horse and his rider loomed up before the young partisan, and Dick's hand shot suddenly forward.

"Halt!" he cried, as he clutched a bridle rein. "Methinks you are over merry tonight."

There was a quick start on the part of the person addressed, and Tiny Tom bent forward and peered into Dick's face.

"Ho! is it you, Master Lightfoot?" queried the boy, with a light chuckle. "Just the very person I'm looking for. You must have heard my new song?"

"Of course I heard you," responded Dick.

"Then listen to the last verse:

"When Redcoat Tarleton rides no more
    The country will be free,
And 'neath our flag we'll always know
    A land of liberty."

"That's good!" exclaimed Dick. "what news have you?"

"News of a fine time down the road," smiled the balladist. "They are dancing and praising the King in Belden Manor."

"Who are there, Tom?"

"A pretty rout I assure you, Master Dick," was the response. "I didn't stay long enough to look over the whole crowd, but I saw enough to make my blood boil."

"We'll look in upon the party," suggested Dick, turning Tom's horse in the direction from which he had come. "It's no harm to do that, eh, boy?"

About half a mile down the road stood a large manor house, the property of Silas Belden, the richest Tory in the colony. He was a man who had made himself obnoxious to every patriot, for he hated them all, and did all in his power to subdue them. Belden was famous for his wealth, and besides, he had a stable of the fleetest horses in the whole district. He had sent his swiftest steed to Colonel Tarleton with the wish that he would run down every man who did not swear allegiance to King George.

The two boys soon came in sight of this palatial home which crowned a gentle eminence. It seemed to blaze with lights, and from it came strains of ravishing music. A number of handsome saddle horses were hitched to the trees of the grove that fronted the mansion, and Dick and Tom soon drew near.

"It's a pretty howdy-do," smiled the young Night Hawk. "They are having a merry time sure enough. Listen, Tom, they are playing the King's favorite tune now."

"Well, old Morgan will make 'em dance to another when he plays the fiddle," answered Tiny Tom.

"Let's play a trick on the merrymakers," Dick went on. "No one seems to be on guard."

"None that I can see, Master Dick."

Dick rode a little nearer and dismounted. In a few moments he was stripping every horse of its saddle, and his keen knife was rendering the girths useless. He next removed the linchpins from the wheels of the vehicles before the house, and when he was through he came back to his companion.

"Now for the fun," said he. "Hold Lightning's bridle, Tom, and wait for me."

Dick ran back to the house and bounded upon the porch. The dance inside was fast and furious. He could see the swaying figures of the merrymakers and noticed that the fiddlers were doing their utmost. The next second he was hammering on the front door with all his might.

"Rebels! Rebels coming!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "Morgan is up the road!"

In an instant the music ceased, and there were cries of terror from the handsomely dressed women and a scurrying on the part of the men. The scene was uproarious. There was a mad rush for the door as the nimble Dick cleared the porch.

"Hurrah for liberty!" he cried, as he struck the ground below.

"It's Dick o' the Dark," exclaimed a voice. "It's that audacious young Rebel. There he goes! After him, men! Ten guineas to the lucky fellow who brings him back."

By this time Dick was once more in the saddle, and the well dressed Tories were rushing toward their own steeds. A cry of rage arose when they discovered the work of the young partisan. Every horse had lost its saddle, and all of them had been tumbled in a promiscuous heap.

"Follow him bareback! Don't let the young Night Hawk escape us. Yonder he goes, my hearties!" and the whole lot seemed to throw themselves after the two boys.

Old Belden was still crying his commands from the porch, where he was surrounded by white-faced women. He was clutching the air in his madness and offering more than ten guineas for Dick's apprehension. Meantime the two boys were scurrying away, laughing at their trick. They could hear their pursuers behind them for they had lost no time in mounting, and the road seemed full of racing steeds.

"Long live Washington, and death to Tarleton!" cried Dick.

"Follow, follow, man for man,
Catch and hang us if you can."

sang Tiny Tom whose blond hair was waving like a streamer behind him

"Ride on, Tom," suddenly said Dick, drawing rein beneath a tree.

"And leave you to the mercy of the Tory wolves?"

"I'll hold my own with them," was the cool reply.

"But if they catch you, Master Dick——"

"They're not going to have such good luck, Tom."

With a last look at his companion, Tiny Tom spurred on and was soon out of sight. Dick drew close to the tree and waited for his pursuers. He had cocked a pistol and was looking back toward the manor. For a few seconds he saw no one, and then the foremost chaser loomed between him and the full-orbed silver moon. The fellow seemed to have distanced his comrades, for he was riding alone. Dick o' the Dark did not take eye from him. In a jiffy the breathless Tory came alongside.

"Halt!" commanded Dick.

The man recoiled with a start, and almost pulled his horse upon its haunches.

"How do you like bareback riding, Master Gaffney?" grinned Dick.

"You, Lightfoot?" gasped the Tory.

"Why not? You didn't think I was General Morgan?"

"Well, no. It's another of your tricks."

"Sure, Master Gaffney. Take off your coat, please."

"I won't!"

The words were couched in a fierce snarl.

"Hand your coat to me," commanded Dick, in sterner tones.

"Gads, boy! my watch and money are in the garment."

"Never mind that."

"And I've got precious papers there as well."

"I don't doubt it, Master Gaffney. Hand me your coat, I say."

With the pistol almost touching his face, the mad Tory divested himself of his fine coat, which he tossed across Dick's saddlebow with a grated curse.

"I'll pay you some day for this robbery!" he hissed.

"Catch me first, sir," was the laughing response.

"I'll have you hanged to the nearest tree."

"You can't stew rabbits till you've caught them."

"Oh, you're a precious little Rebel," growled Gaffney.

"I accept the compliment, Master Gaffney. Now go back and conclude your waltz. I hope you had the lovely Miss Belden for your partner. Give her Dick o' the Dark's compliments."

A minute later Dick was riding toward Tiny Tom, whom he presently joined.

"We'll see what we got," he said, when they emerged into the broad moonlight. "Well, this is a find. Look, Tom. A gold watch, fifty guineas, and a paper which was intended for Tarleton, giving him a list of 'Rebels' who are to be burned out. I'd like to hear Master

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Gaffney tell his story to the people in Belden Manor!" and the boys laughed together.

CHAPTER III.
AT BAY.

THE indignation occasioned by Dick's trick at the Belden plantation knew no bounds. Master Gaffney was the most enraged of all, and almost shed tears when he related his despoiling by the young Night Rider. He forthwith drew up an offer of reward for the arrest of Dick o' the Dark, which was soon posted everywhere in the district. The youth was not long learning of this, and halted at the posted places and added some remarks to the placards.

"I half believe you rather approve of the young rascal's exploit," said old Belden to his daughter, Celia, a few days after the incident.

"I can't say that I sympathize much with Master Gaffney," replied the young girl, with a haughty toss of her head. "He is all bark and no bite."

"Have a care how you talk of the King's friends!" admonished the Tory. "Colonel Tarleton will soon be my guest and——"

"And I wish Dick o' the Dark were here to welcome him," smiled the daughter.

"You do?" roared Tory Belden, with a stamp of his foot.

"Yes. I'm sure he could do it in royal style."

"Oh, by that time we will have this young highwayman in our clutches!"

Celia strode from her father's presence, and the old man tramped from the house in no good humor.

Meantime Patrick Malloy, smarting under his last encounter with our hero, was determined to get even with him. Patrick was a bachelor who had set eyes on Mistress Searle, the pretty niece of Eli S[illegible], and he had vowed to himself that he would win her, Rebel though she was.

"If I can get this young fly-by-night out of the way," quoth he, "I will have no rival. I can see that she thinks a good deal of Dick o' the Dark, and I must lay my plans accordingly."

The next day he again visited Emily's home and congratulated himself upon finding the girl alone.

"Miss Emily," said he, in the most loverlike manner he could assume, "I have something nearest my heart——"

"Your doublet probably, Master Malloy," interrupted the girl, mischievously.

"No, my dear child, it is love, that beautiful affection. I seek a mistress for Malloy Hall——"

"I'm quite sure you will not have to seek long. Now, there is the Widow Simms——"

"What, that termagant?" cried Patrick, drawing back.

"Why not, Master Malloy? I'm sure she is quite docile."

"But the mistress whom I seek is far superior to her. Listen to me, Emily. I have almost a thousand acres, and my home is as fine as you can find in the colony. If you will only consent to become Mistress Malloy, you will make me happy for life," and with this the Tory fell upon his knees before the fair girl and waited for her answer.

The shades of night were descending upon the winter landscape, and Emily had thought of lighting the candles.

"I trust you have recovered from your meeting with Master Lightfoot," she said, paying no attention to his lovemaking. "It was rather cruel in him smiting you in the manner he did, and you so much older than he."

"He gave me no opportunity to resent the blow," growled Patrick. "But never mind. I chafe for the time when I can meet him again, and then, Miss Emily, you shall see which is master."

At that moment the girl glanced out of the window and perceived a horseman advancing toward the house.

"I do believe Master Lightfoot is coming now," said she, with a hurried look at Malloy, who leaped to his feet.

"Where is he?" he cried, turning toward the door. "You really don't mean that young gallows bird is here?"

"He is now on the porch, Master Malloy. What, aren't you going to stand your ground? I thought you chafed to lay hands on Dick o' the Dark?"

Patrick snatched up his hat and strode across the room.

"I want no unseemly meeting in your fair presence," he exclaimed, turning pale.

"But Master Lightfoot may wish to see you," persisted Emily, whose face betrayed her merriment. "Please don't go. Dick may have news from the seat of war——"

"Let him keep it if he has," was the interruption. "Good night, Mistress Searle," and Patrick was tugging at the back door as he gave vent to the last words.

But the door was locked.

"I shall slay the young scamp if I remain," pleaded the Tory. "If you don't want murder done in your house, you will let me into the garden."

"Oh, I'll protect you from the lion!" smiled Emily. "I'll stand between you and danger," and pushing the trembling Tory back, she saw the other door swing wide to admit Dick o' the Dark.

The young Night Rider sprang lightly into the room, but paused the moment his gaze alighted upon Malloy.

"My old friend Patrick!" he exclaimed, with a hurried glance toward Miss Searle. "This is an unexpected pleasure. I trust you are well, Patrick."

If looks could kill, Dick would have fallen dead at the Tory's feet. Patrick pulled himself together as best he could, and glared at his youthful rival.

"Your old friend Tarleton is really coming," Dick continued, addressing the cringing Tory. "I dare say he will need your services. Of course you will rally your friends and fight for the King under Colonel Tarleton's banner."

Patrick took out his great watch and looked at it a moment.

"Really, I must be going," said he. "It is quite dark by now, and I have work to do before I retire."

"But I thought," said Emily, "that you chafed——"

"Kindly let me out," broke in Malloy. "My servants of late have been dilatory in their duties, and must be looked to."

"Just one moment, Master Malloy," said Dick, at this juncture. "There was quite a little affair last night at the ford. Captain Jenkins, who commands the Night Vultures, was attacked and lost three men and his coat."

"And I'll warrant you can tell where Captain Jenkins's coat is!" flashed Patrick, as if the courage of a lion had suddenly taken possession of him.

"To be sure I can," replied Dick, with a look at Emily. "I hung it on a limb of the big oak at the ford after the fight. I don't know whether Captain Jenkins has stopped running yet or not, but if you see him you can tell him where his garment is. It would have been a pretty little fight if the Tories had not cut dirt so soon. They outnumbered us, but they didn't stop to take notice of it."

"Say," almost shrieked Patrick, "we'll hang you yet, you young road robber!"

"Not unless you Tories stand up and fight," grinned Dick. "I found in the captain's coat a list of Rebels who are to be chastised by Colonel Tarleton when he comes. It was similar to the list I took from Master Gaffney the other night at Belden's. And by the way, Master Malloy, you signed the list Jenkins had, and——"

"I won't listen to this!" broke in the Tory. "I won't quarrel with a boy——"

"No? Perhaps that is why you wrote the name of Dick o' the Dark in big broad letters in the list, and wanted him turned over to you. Well, I'm here now."

But there was no fight in the blatant Tory, and he was permitted to slink away in peace.

"Did you really whip Captain Jenkins?" asked Emily, when she found herself alone with Dick.

"To be sure we did. We, the Night Riders, took the Tory band unawares, and couldn't resist the opportunity to give them a good trounching. But they ran like sheep. Have you seen the proclamations for my arrest, Miss Emily?"

"I heard such were out, but as yet I haven't caught sight of them."

"Then I'll enlighten you," answered Dick, taking a paper from his pocket. "Light the candle so I can see."

This the young girl proceeded to do, and held the light close to Dick's face as he read as follows:

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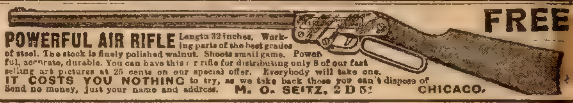

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known that we the undersigned, desirous of ridding this district of those who have infested it for a long time defying openly the authority of the King, do hereby offer a reward of fifteen guineas for the apprehension of one Richard Lightfoot, commonly called Dick o' the Dark, and we call upon all loyal persons to run this young Rebel to earth. The reward will be paid to the proper persons upon proof that the young Rebel has been apprehended.

["Signed.]

"THE NIGHT VULTURES."

"Now that's a pretty paper!" cried Dick, holding the paper up before Emily. "You see it hasn't as yet been the means of apprehending 'Yours Respectfully,' but there's no telling what may come of it."

"Nothing, I trust," said the girl, sympathetically. "But you will have to be on your guard constantly, Dick."

"I guess they won't catch the fox napping," was the reply.

The next minute the door had been flung open, and Dick looked into the faces of three British dragoons.

(Continued next week.)

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Doris Lyndahl.

(Continued from page nine.)

The sharp edge of her nature had been softened to gentle tolerance by the magic of love. Her nearby home was still her realm, but whether she ruled Martha or was cleverly managed by that devoted attendant was an open question. Jud was no longer chore boy. His researches into veterinary lore bore luxuriant fruit. He was employed far and near in the cure of ailing horses and cattle. The business was very remunerative, and his title euphonious, being Dr. Kilbeam. Lucy likewise was missing from the establishment, being busied in one of her own. She had become "Mrs. Dr. Kilbeam," and was exceedingly proud of her name and husband.

Doris, regally beautiful and betraying in every graceful movement the conscious power of a strong personality, came from the open door and lifted her little daughter in her strong arms for a close embrace.

"Doris," the elder woman said earnestly, "you are favored of Heaven to possess this child. My life was embittered by the want of children. Thank you, dear, for allowing me to share your blessing—for permitting me to share Agatha, and for giving her a name that I must have rendered hateful. The dear babe and you have made of me a happier woman than I ever hoped. I am——"

"You are my dear mother and Agatha's darling grandma," supplied Doris.

The End.

* * *

The Real Washington

"You say," I remarked to the old negro who drove the hack, "that you were General Washington's body-servant?"

"Dat's so! Dat's jes so, massa. I done waited on Washington sence he was so high—no bigger'n a small chile."

"You know the story, then, about the cherry tree and the hatchet?"

"Know it? Why I was dar on de spot. I seen Massa Gawge climb de tree after de cherries, and I seen him fling de hatchet at de boys who was a stonin' him. I done chase dem boys off de place meself."

"Do you remember his appearance as a man? What he looked like?"

"Yes, indeedy. He was a kinder short, chunky man; sorter fat and hearty-lookin'. He had chin whiskers and mustache and spectacles. Mos' generally he wore a high hat; but I'se seed him in a fur cap wid ear-warmers!"

"You were not with him, of course, when he crossed the Delaware—when he went across the Delaware River?"

"Wid him? Yes, sah. I was right dar. I was not mor'n two feet off'n him as he druv across de bridge in his buggy! Dat's a fac'. I walked 'longside de off hind wheel ob dat buggy all de way."

"You saw him, then, when he fought the British at Trenton?"

"Sho's your born I did! I held Massa Gawge's coat an' hat while he fought the British at dat werry place. Massa Gawge clinched him and den dey rassled and rassled, and at first he frew Massa Gawge, and den Massa Gawge flung him, and set on him and one hammered him till he cried 'nuff! Massa Gawge won dat night. I seed him wid me own eyes! An I come home wid him in de kyars!"

"You weren't with him, though, when he shot the apple off the boy's head?"

"Who wa'nt wid him? I wa'nt? I was de only pusson dar 'ceptin' one white man. I loaded Massa Gawge's revolver and handed it to him, and picked up de apple an' et it soon as he'd knocked it off. Nobody can't tell dish yer old niggah nuffin' 'bout dat circumstance."

"You knew all of the General's relations, too, I suppose? Martin Luther and Peter the Hermit and the rest?"

"Knowed um all. Many and many's de time I done waited on de table when Massa Gawge had um to dinner. I remember dem two gemmen jes' 's well 's if I'd a seen um yesterday. Yes, sah, I druv 'em out often!"

"I've frequently seen pictures of Washington in which he is represented sitting upon a white horse. Did he really ride a white horse, or don't you recall the color of his horse?"

"Why, bress your soul; 'call de color ob de hoss—'call de color ob it? Do you see dish yer nigh hoss dat I'm a drivin' now, right yer? Well, dat's de werry hoss, Massa Gawge used to ride. He lef' it to me in his will!"

Just then we reached the station and I dismounted from the hack and paid Washington's body-servant for his service. No doubt a longer conversation with him would have revealed other new and startling facts relating to the Father of His Country.

* * *

Not to Blame.

Tenant—"See here! That house you rented me is infested with rats. Every night we are waked up by the racket."

Agent—"That's very strange. The last tenant never said a word about rats."

"Well, then, of course, you are not to blame."

"No. The people who lived there before never complained of anything except ghosts."

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The Actor's Trick.

Romeo Wellington Smith was a comedian, and Smith, like many actors, was always hard up. He owed his printer, Harris, one hundred and ten dollars, and the latter had a judgment for the amount.

"Now, I am tired of waiting," said Harris, as he met Smith some days ago, "and you've got to pay the money at once, or something will happen?"

"Why, really," said Smith, with a bland smile, "I haven't the money with me, my boy, but"—as if struck with a sudden inspiration—"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get it for you if you'll come with me."

"Where to, and how far?"

"To a friend of mine, Dr. Wesley, whose office is at the corner below. He will lend me the money. But we'll have to hurry, as I want to catch a train."

Conciliated with a prospect of getting his money, the creditor readily accompanied Smith to the doctor's office, which they found, on their entrance, to be fairly filled with patients, each awating his turn.

"Confound it!" said Smith, "just my luck, and I am in a hurry, too. I must see Dr. Wesley, and explain my errand."

He stepped forward and beckoned to the Doctor, who advanced and welcomed him with a cordial smile. Smith held a whispered conversation with Dr. Wesley, frequently indicating the patient creditor by a motion of his hand. Then he called Harris up to the Doctor, as he huriedly glanced at his watch.

"Dr. Wesley will fix that with you," he said. "I must run to catch my train now. By-by," and off he went.

"That's all right, sir," said the Doctor, in a kindly tone, to the creditor. "Just sit down a few minutes, and I will then be ready to attend to your case."

Mr. Harris sat down with a sigh of relief, and waited ten, fifteen, twenty minutes. At the end of that time his turn came, and the Doctor motioned him to follow into his private room, where, after closing the door, he told him to be seated.

"Now sir," he said cheerfully ,"how long has this affair been going on?"

"It's a good deal over a year now?"

"Well, for goodness' sake, why didn't you come to me before? I could have made it all right for you."

"How did I know?"

"But you might have gone to somebody else. Any competent practitioner could have given you advice."

"Advice be hanged! I want money. I am tired of advice."

"But haven't you money to pay for advice?" asked the Doctor, cautiously.

"Certainly I have. But what's the use of throwing good money after bad? I have a judgment against him, and that's enough."

"Against whom?"

"Against Smith, of course."

"What for?"

"What for! Why, for the hundred and ten dollars you are to pay me."

"Me to pay you!" ejaculated the astonished Doctor, rising from his chair. "My friend, what are you talking about?"

"I am talking about my hundred and ten dollars!" thundered the now wrathful Harris, "and I heard you distinctly say that you would attend to my case."

"Listen!" gasped the Doctor. "Are you mad, or am I? I don't know the man from Adam. He confided to me that you were suffering from sleeplessness and hypochondria, and needed advice and medicine. He never said a word about money, but I understood from him that you would pay well for treatment."

Harris crawled out into the street, went home, and kicked himself, and the Doctor has vowed never to listen to patients by proxy again.

* * *

Opposed to the Unions.

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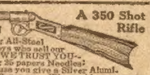

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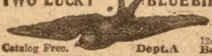

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NAMES.

There was once a boy who was five years old whose name was George Washington Bell. He was called so because he was born on the twenty-second day of February.

Most boys would have been proud of such a name, but this particular boy did not like it. That was because the other George Washington, who was born ever so many years before on the twenty-second of February, is known as the great and good George Washington. Now, young George—we will call him George—was a pretty good boy, not naughty generally more than fifteen or twenty times a day; but whenever he was naughty, his mother or father or aunt or uncle or somebody would say:

"Oh, George, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! I'm sure the great George Washington would never have behaved so badly!" until he began positively to hate the great George.

Young George thought it unkind of the great George to take his name, and he determined to see him and ask him to get another name; but on asking where he lived, he was told he had been dead more than a hundred years. So, as it was too late for the great George to change his name young George thought it would be a good plan to change his own name. He went to his mother about it. After hearing his request his mother said:

"Very well, George, we will change your name. What would you like to be called?"

There were so many names to choose from that it took George a long time to make up his mind; but at last he decided on Billy. And from that time on he was called Billy by his mother and father.

His friends, however, laughed at him for changing his name, and called him "Billy Goat" and even "Silly Billy." This made him cry, and he went to his mother and asked her to change his name again, this time to Peter.

So his mother changed his name again. But still his troubles were not over, for his friends called him "Peter, Peter, Punkin Eater" and "Peter Piper," and asked him the price of pickled peppers, which made him mad.

However, he was ashamed to change his name again, so he kept on being Peter until the twenty-first of February, the day before his birthday. On that morning some parcels came to the house, and he eagerly asked his mother whom they were for.

"Why, they are intended for a little boy named George," she replied, "but as there is no one of that name here, we must send them back."

"But that is my name!" cried young George.

"Oh, no," said his mother, "your name is Peter."

"But my real name is George," he protested, "and I want it back again!"

"Very well," said his mother, "but if you take it back you must keep it, for we can't be bothered changing a little boy's name every few days."

So the little boy became George Washington again, and when he grew older and read about the great George Washington he really was proud of the name.

❧

Imitating George.

You know how it is with boys. They imitate others. So when Washington's Birthday had come and passed, one year, George Cornwall, a small boy of Southington, Conn., considered the great man for whom he had been named and decided to be as great. So he took a hatchet and went out to chop down a cherry tree.

As it happens, cherry trees are not so plentiful in Southington that the young Cornwall could tell them from peach trees before spring time, and so a pine tree looked just as good to the young hero. It stood at the side of the road, and George Washington chopped at it until he was tired. Then it fell.

It was a tall young tree, and as it fell it found some telephone and telegraph and electric power wires in the way. Straightway it snapped them, continuing its fall, and the telephones and electric lights and most of the telegraphs in Southington went out of order. Thereupon young Cornwall said, "I did it with my little hatchet," just once. The result was so terrible that he didn't say it again. He was a very uncomfortable boy, and Southington was a rather uncomfortable town until the wires were put up again.

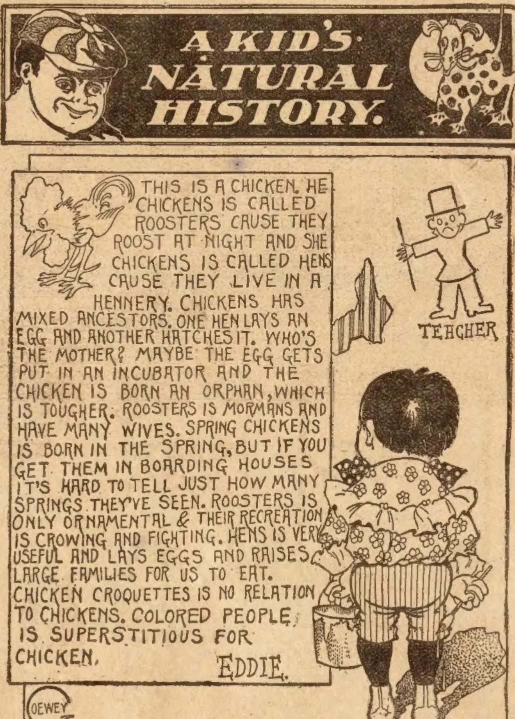
❧

Words.

There are some words that can walk backward as well as forward and mean the same thing. See how many you can find. Here are a few of them:

Hannah, nun, repaper, noon, redder, sexes, level, madam, shahs.

Of course, you can find plenty, such as "dam," that make other words when they are spelled backward, but they don't count.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Ventriloquists Double Throat Fits roof of mouth; always invisible; greatest thing yet. Astonish and mystify your friends. Neigh like a horse; whine like a puppy; sing like a canary and imitate birds and beasts of field and forest. LOADS OF FUN. Wonderful invention. Thousands sold. Price only 10 cents; 4 for 25 cents or 12 for 50 cents.
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ARE THEY WEAK OR PAINFUL?
Do your lungs ever bleed?
Do you have night sweats?
Have you pains in chest and sides?
Do you spit yellow and black matter?
Are you continually hawking and coughing?
Do you have pains under your shoulder blades?
These are Regarded Symptoms of Lung Trouble and
TUBERCULOSIS

You should take immediate steps to check the progress of these symptoms. The longer you allow them to advance and develop, the more deep seated and serious your condition becomes.

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JUST SEND YOUR NAME
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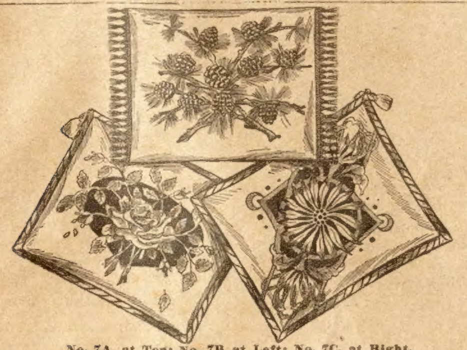
We call the attention of every woman to the beauty of the patterns displayed from week to week, and wish to impress upon each one the splendid quality of material that makes our offer a great bargain in every case. Every offer is complete. You can finish it up without buying anything extra.

These designs are already stamped on best quality cloth, and every set comes to you complete, exactly as described.

Every one of the designs we are going to offer is new and up-to-date, and nowhere else can you secure the same, as they are made exclusively for us.

You are sure to find many articles that you want if you watch the Ledger each week, and it is so easy to get them, every woman should have little trouble in getting almost every one.

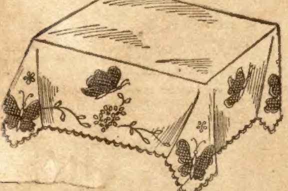


No. 7A, at Top; No. 7B at Left; No. 7C, at Right.

Nos. 7A, 7B, 7C, Sofa Pillows.

SOFA PILLOWS, NOS. 7A, 7B, 7C.—A set of three hand-painted sofa pillows, all handsomely tinted in colors on Aberdeen crash, size 17x22 inches, including back of ticking and five skeins of colored, mercerized luster for working.

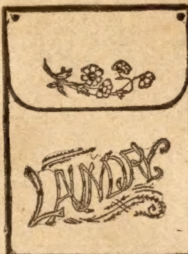
Any one of these beautiful pillows sent free to any one who will send us $1.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to either the Blade or the Ledger. Any one pillow will be sent without the paper if you send us sixty cents.



No. 5, Stamped Table Cover.

NO. 5, STAMPED TABLE COVER FOR PUNCH WORK.—This table cover is stamped on linon, size 36x36 inches, and includes: 2 packages of assorted needles; 1 punch work needle; 1 stiletto; 15 skeins of C. B. embroidery cotton; 1 book of embroidery stitches by "Mme. DuParque."

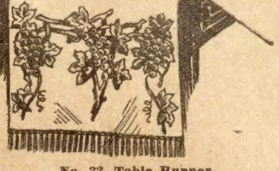
This dainty design, complete as described above, sent free to any one who will send us $2.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to both the Blade and the Ledger. This table cover may be had without the paper by sending $1.15.



No. 4, Ready-Made Laundry Bag.

NO. 4, READY-MADE LAUNDRY BAG, SIZE 12x20 INCHES.—This laundry bag is ready-made on tan drill bound with red tape, with two brass eyelets on which to hang same. Also five skeins of red cotton for working.

Sent complete to any one sending us $1.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to the Blade or the Ledger. You can get this laundry bag without the paper by sending fifty cents.

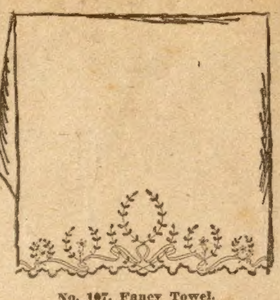


No. 33, Table Runner.

NO. 33, TABLE RUNNER.—This beautiful table runner is tinted in colors. The patterns are dyed on Aberdeen crash 17x48 inches. It will ornament and enliven any parlor or sittingroom.

Any one sending $1.00 for one year's subscription (new or renewal) to either the Blade or the Ledger, will receive this article as it is described, absolutely free, all charges prepaid. This table runner will be sent without the paper if you send us forty-five cents.

NO. 107, FANCY TOWEL.—This towel and design is for solid embroidery and edges to be buttonholed. The pattern is stamped on cotton huck 20x36 inches. The quality of the material is excellent, and the offer includes floss for working.



No. 107, Fancy Towel.

It will be sent you absolutely free of charge when you send $1.00 for a year's subscription to the Blade or the Ledger.

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If you are in trouble, perplexed, or at a loss what to do to secure your greatest desire, I want you to let me help you. I have taught many the way to success and happiness. A well-known actress says she owes her success to me. I foretold the future for a prominent politician. My system of astrology found a fortune for a successful business man. I will send you full details of these and other cases. What I have done for others I can do for you.

Send me your full name and address, stating whether Mr., Mrs. Miss, and exact date of birth, put 2c postage on your letter and enclose 10c stamps (not coin) to cover part expenses of typing, return postage, etc., and I will send you specially prepared free test reading at once. Write plainly. Address Carlius Amhoff, 81 Shaftesbury Avenue, Suite 962-B., London, W., England.

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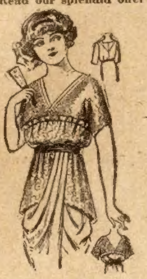
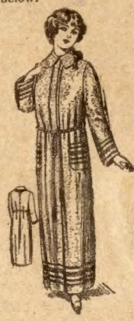
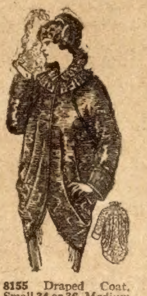
We make a splendid offer of the best and most fashionable patterns that can be produced by the greatest designers of New York and Paris, and what is more, these patterns will be within the reach of every one, and every one will have a wide selection to choose from. **Read our splendid offer below.**



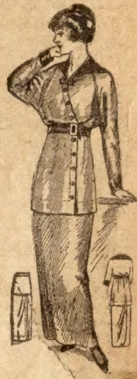
8168 Fancy Blouse for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 18 years. Shown with Skirt 8161



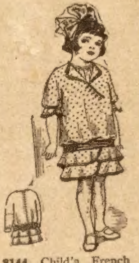
8161 Bath Robe for Misses and Small Women, 14, 16 and 18 years.



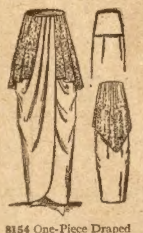
8155 Draped Coat, Small 34 or 36, Medium 38 or 40, Large 42 or 44 bust.



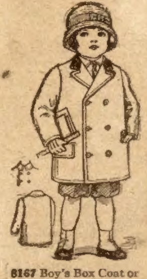
8156 Blouse Costume with Tunic, 34 to 42 bust.



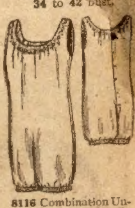
8144 Child's French Blouse Dress, 4 to 8 years.



8154 One-Piece Draped Skirt, 22 to 32 waist.



8167 Boy's Box Coat or Reefer, 4 to 8 years.



8116 Combination Under Garment, Small 34 or 36, Medium 38 or 40, Large 42 or 44 bust.

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Here is the way we will do it. To every one who will send us one dollar for a year's subscription to The Chicago Ledger we will send absolutely free five pattern coupons. Each coupon will be good for one pattern and you can select the patterns from those illustrated in any issue of The Chicago Ledger. When you see a pattern that you like all you have to do is to send us a coupon and it will be sent to you at once. In this way you will have hundreds of patterns from which to pick the five that you will be entitled to, and you have all the time you need to pick out the ones you want.

These patterns are the best that can be made. Each pattern gives full directions for the cutting and making with information as to the amount of cloth required, etc, so that any one can make any of the designs illustrated with no trouble at all. At the same time, they are so stylish and accurately cut that dressmakers and seamstresses all over the country will be quick to take advantage of this liberal offer. Some will subscribe for two years so they can get ten coupons. These designs are made by the best designers and modists of New York and Paris, and are up-to-the-minute in fashion and beauty.

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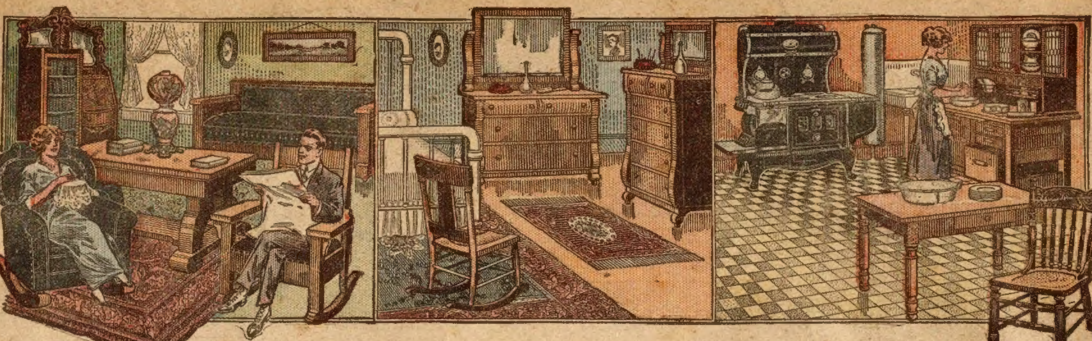
If you wish any pattern from those advertised in this issue, mark the number and size on the margin and we will retain a coupon for each pattern we send you when we send you the Coupon Book. (Order by size and number.) **GOOD FOR ANY TIME.**



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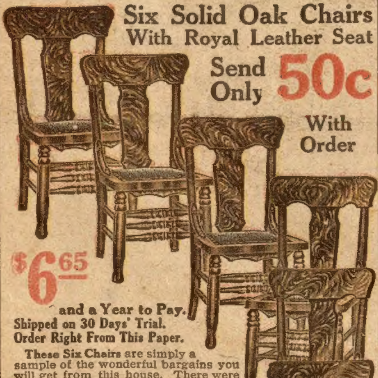

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Order Right From This Paper.

These Six Chairs are simply a sample of the wonderful bargains you will get from this house. There were not enough of these chairs to show in our Big Spring Bargain Book, so we offer them to you here to be ordered direct from this paper. Send only 50c with order; pay only 65c monthly if you decide to keep them.

Heavy Banister Back is beautifully shaped, built of solid oak; in fact, solid oak is used in the construction throughout. Each chair is finished in a rich golden shade.

Royal Leather of guaranteed quality is used in covering the seat, which is nicely padded. Seat measures 16½ inches wide and 15 inches deep; is rigidly supported by shapely apron front and sturdy legs firmly braced by shapely turned spindles. These are first-class chairs at a bargain price. Shipping weight about 80 lbs.

No. D4B4423. Price, set of 6, **$6.65**

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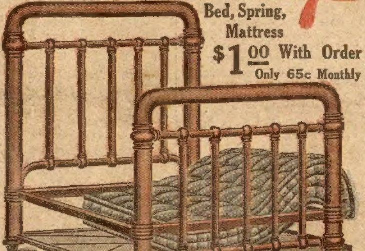
Bed, Spring, Mattress
$1.00 With Order
Only 65c Monthly



Notice the Heavy Posts

A Complete Outfit that usually sells for more than half again our price. Yet it is just a sample of the startling values we offer, and must be ordered direct from this paper, as there were not enough to catalog. Shipped on 30 days' trial.

Handsome Bed is the high-grade continuous post design with gracefully rounded corners; made of best guaranteed quality Bessemer steel. Posts are 1 1-16 inches thick, and the five upright filling rods are 5-16 inches thick. These rods are joined to the bottom cross rails by neat chills. Bed stands 57 inches high at head end and 38½ inches high at foot end. Finished in the famous Vernis Martin, all-gold finish, or in apple, blue, pink or white. **Comes in 4 ft. 6 in. size only; mention color desired.**

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No. D4B5578. Bed, Spring, Mattress. Shipping weight, about 185 lbs. Price..... **$7.45**

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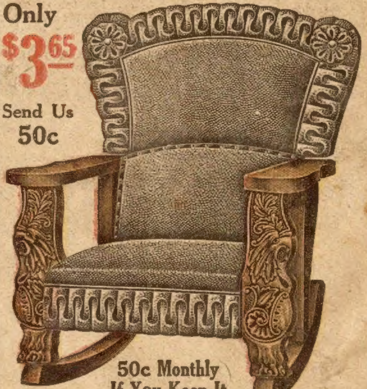

50c Monthly If You Keep It

This Solid Oak Rocker is offered at a price you can easily afford. It is just a sample of the bargains to be found in our catalog, but as the quantity is limited, you must order direct from this paper on 30 days' trial. **The Entire Frame** is built of selected solid oak, nicely finished in a rich shade of golden with a high gloss. Front posts are extra broad and massive, terminating at the foot into deep carved claw feet. Notice the rich dragon head design carving on the posts. The arms are very broad and shapely.

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